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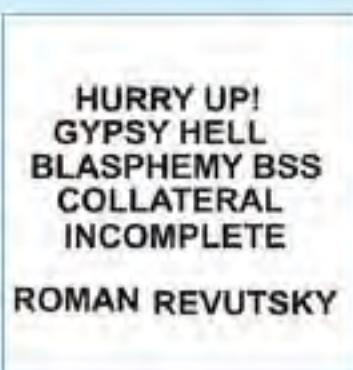
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Von Südenfed
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The Wire Tapper 17

Your track by track guide to this month's free CD



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01 Eglantine Gouzy "Cuckoo"

From the album Boamaster (Osaka)

Paris resident Eglantine Gouzy began making her electronic song miniatures after relieving her ex-boyfriend of his Kaoss pad. As well as her debut album Boamaster, she has been included on Monika Enterprise's recent 4 Woman No Cry compilation, and has remixed Hauschka for Karaoke Kalk.

02 Longstone "Kabuki" (Edit)

From the album Kabuki (Ochre)

Mike Cross and Mike Ward, who formed Longstone in 1996 as a crossover project between rock and electronica, have more recently been joined by improvising reeds player Chris Cundy (of Grace And Delete and Guillemots). Their new album Kabuki is complemented by Longstoned (Elbandito), a separate collection of Longstone's remixes of other artists including Will Sergeant, Stylus and Silverman, plus a collaboration with Guillemots' guitarist, MC Lord Magrao.

03 A Hawk And A Hacksaw And The Hun Hangár Ensemble "Zozobra"

From the EP A Hawk And A Hacksaw And The Hun Hangár Ensemble (The Leaf Label)

The Hawk And A Hacksaw duo of Jeremy Barnes and Heather Trost are on an idiosyncratic nomadic quest to uncover folk music's less travelled roads, with particular attention to the Roma and Balkan rhythms and sounds of Eastern Europe. Anticipating a tour of the UK this month, this EP showcases the individual talents of four of Hungary's most adventurous musicians. On "Zozobra", the cimbalom is played by Balázs Unger, with Barnes handling all other instruments.

04 Jonquil "Sudden Sun"

From the album Lions (Try Harder)

This young Oxford five piece have a reputation for hoarding unusual musical instruments, and the members' diverse backgrounds include work in avant hiphop, electronica and jazz. Following their debut album Sunny Casinos, they have played support slots on UK tours by A Hawk And A Hacksaw, A Silver Mt Zion and Mi & L'au. Lions is released in June.

05 Kammerflimmer Kollektief

"Live At The Cactus Tree Motel"

From the album Jinx (Staubgold)

KK's core personnel of Thomas Weber (guitar, electronics, piano), Heike Aumüller (harmonium, vocals, synthesizer, percussion) and Johannes Frisch (double bass, percussion) have just completed their sixth album, where their earlier loose, widescreen approach has been compacted into more intimate electroacoustic miniatures. Additional players on Jinx include Martin Siewert (guitars), Harald Kimmig (violin) and Marco Preitschopf (electronics).

06 Badun "Fyrtårn"

From the album Badun (Rump Recordings)

Flickering micro-rhythms, free-spirited jazz fusion and electronic glitchery litter the cyber-funk tracks of this Danish trio. Oliver Duckert, Aske Krammer and Brian Møller have been active since 2001, but have not recorded until now. All sounds used in Badun's music are generated by the group, with no sampling allowed.

07 Von Südenfed "Family Feud"

From the album Tromatic Reflexxions (Domino)

This newly formed trio comprising The Fall's Mark E Smith and Mouse On Mars's Andi Toma and Jan St Werner describe themselves as a "futurist sound system" and a "hybrid band". Following through on MOM's recent pirate radio-inspired forays into Grime, dubstep and mutant disco, as well as Smith's eternal fascination with earlier Krautrock generations, Von Südenfed is a genuine face to face collaboration set to appear live and record together in the future. On "Family Feud", Smith adopts the characters of different members of a family and arbitrates between them.

08 Pomassl "Tandem Distiller"

(Wire Tapper Edit)

From the albums Amalgama (Laton) and Spare Parts (Raster-Noton)

From the sonic laboratory of Austrian "psycho-physio" musician Franz Pomassl comes the latest example of his interest in deconstructing musical structure and testing the limits of hearing. "Tandem Distiller" was produced using various vintage Soviet synthesizers and machines, and appears in two different versions on his forthcoming records for Carsten Nicolai's Raster-Noton label and Laton, the imprint he co-founded in the early 90s.

09 Throbbing Gristle "How Do You Deal?"

(Exclusive Wire Tapper Edit)

From the film Live At The Astoria, from the DVD box set TGV (Industrial/Mute)

Before 2004, the reformation of the original Industrial outfit, which imploded back in 1981, was almost impossible to predict. But in May of that year, Chris Carter, Peter Christopherson, Genesis P-Orridge and Cosey Fanni Tutti gave a performance at London's Astoria which was filmed for posterity. This track is taken from the soundtrack to that first comeback; since then there have been a string of successive appearances as well as their first studio album in 25 years, Part Two – The Endless Not, which has just appeared on Industrial/Mute Records.

10 Alfred 23 Harth "Pearl"

Composite recording from the Mother Of Pearl 5xCD series

The German polystylist is currently based in Seoul, Korea, and Frankfurt/Main, Germany, where he galvanised the local avant garde community back in 1967 with a New Music venue called centrum freier kunst and his free Improv group just music. Harth has played with such musicians as Heiner Goebbels, Otomo Yoshihide and John Zorn. His Mother Of Pearl series, which began in 2003, is a sequence of conceptual improvisations addressing the poetics and politics of Korea.

11 Fred Anderson & Harrison Bankhead**"The Strut"**From the album *The Great Vision Concert* (Ayler)

Saxophonist Fred Anderson is a pillar of Chicago's jazz community, while Harrison Bankhead is a double bassist who has worked with many contemporary players, and is a member of the group Witches And Devils. The duo concert from which this Anderson composition was lifted took place at the eighth annual Vision Festival of free jazz in New York in 2003, and has attained legendary status ever since.

12 Fridge "Our Place In This"From the album *The Sun* (Text/Temporary Residence)

Little has been heard of this UK post-rock outfit since 2001's *Happiness* – members Kieran Hebden and Adem have gone on to pursue fruitful solo careers – but the group never officially split up. Instead they have continued playing together, and this month roll out a new record that marries keen-edged ensemble playing with canny studio manipulation. Text Records is Hebden's own independent label.

13 Jack Rose & Glenn Jones**"Linden Avenue Stomp"**

From forthcoming 2x7" (Tequila Sunrise)

Jack Rose was a core member of Virginian free rock unit Pelt, but in the past few years has been tapping America's roots music as a solo guitarist. Currently embarked on an occasional project to record with fellow musicians he admires, this duet with Cul De Sac's Glenn Jones is the first of what he hopes will be many future collaborations.

14 Husky Rescue "My Home Ghost"

From the album *Ghost Is Not Real* (Catskills) Husky Rescue's Marko Nyberg grew up in a small town north of Helsinki in Finland, and has worked as a sound designer for commercial TV. Despite an early interest in urban club music, he prefers to create "music that's comforting rather than distracting" with Husky Rescue, which began as a lone endeavour but grew into a group when he was booked to perform at a London venue. The quintet now include singer Reeta-Leena Korhola, guitarist Miika Colliander, keyboardist Ville Riippa and drummer Anssi Sopanen. Of Husky's new album, Nyberg comments, "It's like a death trip of the emotional world."

15 Simon Bookish "A Deception"

(Municipal Mix)

From the album *Trainwreck/Raincheck* (Dummy Head Recordings)

Simon Bookish (real name Leo Chadburn) trained as a classical composer but his chaotic spontaneous spoken word narratives and lo-fi minimalist computer accompaniments have given him a prominent place in the London experimental/electronica scene, working with artists such as Leafcutter John, Saint Etienne and Seb Rochford (Polar Bear). This track was inspired by a dream about being a confidence trickster on a train, collecting fares from unsuspecting passengers.



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16 Venus Bogardus "Motorman"**"Motorman"**Demo of track from the EP *The Motorman* (Patchogue)

Named after a character in a 1950s lesbian pulp fiction novel by Ann Bannon, this literate post-punk trio was formed by married couple James Reich and Hannah Levbang, a Texan relocated to the UK. Fans of Richard Hell, they met via the ex-Voidoid's Web forum, which Levbang now moderates. The pair are writers and poets and for a while ran a celebrated bookshop in Bath. Drummer Obaro Evuarherhe hails from Coventry.

17 Tonesucker "Splatterstrum"

Exclusive Wire Tapper track

Tonesucker is John Bowers (virtual-physical feedback guitar and homemade synthesizers) and Terry Burrows (baritone electric guitar, VCS3 and theremin). Tonesucker work with fundamentalist guitar and electronic drones, pulses and noises recorded in carefully selected locations. "Splatterstrum" was recorded in Ipswich, Norwich, London and in Chartres's Notre Dame Cathedral, when nobody was around. Their CD *Slaughterhouse*, released on their own label Onoma Research, was made in a genuine abattoir.

18 stimulus "Pylons" (Wire Version)From the album *the mind defies* (Beta-Lactam Ring)

The three unnamed members of stimulus have been active for a decade, working with digital and analogue electronics, acoustic instruments and modified location recordings. Their self-released, handmade CDs will soon be available via Beta-Lactam Ring and Colin Potter's Integrated Circuit imprint. The sounds on "Pylons" were collected on an unauthorised, potentially hazardous field visit to the demolition of a power station.

19 Zelenople "Moss Man" (Edit)From the album *His/Hers* (Type Recordings)

Chicago trio Zelenople consists of Matt Christensen (guitars, vocals), Mike Weis (drums/percussion) and Brian Harding (clarinet, guitar). Their brand of 'out' rock has previously appeared on labels such as Loose Thread, Root Strata, Digitalis and 267 Lattajaa, but they have found a new home at Type for their latest album.

20 Ken Ikeda "Iconography"From the album *Mist On The Window* (Spekk)

Ken Ikeda is a video artist and composer born in Tokyo but currently resident in New York. He has exhibited sound art and visual installations and has collaborated with painter Tadanori Yokoo and artist Mariko Mori. *Mist On The Window* is his third album, following *Tzuki* (2000) and *Merge* (2003), both on the Touch label. All sounds on the record are made with handmade string instruments involving rubber bands and synthesizers.

The Wire Tapper 17 is the latest volume in The Wire's ongoing series of new music compilations (for details of previous volumes in the series, turn to page 97) and is given away with all copies of The Wire 279, May 2007.

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The Masthead



Von Südenfed

It takes a grain of sand to seed a pearl inside the pure host of an oyster. This month, *The Wire*, by accident rather than design, is filled with pearls produced by musicians working with artists from beyond their own comfort zones. What do a couple of German exponents of Deleuzian electronica have to do with a recalcitrant bigmouth from Lancashire? What does a formidable microtonal saxophone improviser have to do with a bunch of noise kids? What's a minimalist composer doing setting up a Metal group? Whichever way you look at all this activity, there's plenty of grit in the Vaseline.

"The reason some people don't make great art is that they look around too much, look for gaps or a place where they feel they can belong," says Jan St Werner of Mouse On Mars in our cover story on Von Südenfed, the Düsseldorf duo's unexpected new venture with The Fall's Mark E Smith (page 28). The friction that comes from not belonging – whether in

LEON CHEW

your own head or in a group of collaborators – generates creative energy. St Werner, with one foot in the electronic academia of Amsterdam's STEIM institute and the other in international clubland, confesses just how much MOM's music is about internal battles: beat versus non-beat, letting go versus holding back, thinking versus feeling. Mouse On Mars propagate a need to bend it, change it and shake it up just as it settles into form.

Their creative restlessness has much in common with Evan Parker's. As Philip Clark points out (page 34), Parker still insists on experimenting with new configurations, formats and styles. Here he explains how members of his Electro-Acoustic Ensemble are picked to make a difference rather than to fit in. Although you can overdo conflict in the name of creativity (the Parker-Bailey split, for example, about which Parker talks movingly and eloquently in these pages), positioning yourself in unfamiliar zones inevitably brings out a new side to yourself. Personally speaking, perhaps it's the reason why I have never moved back to my native Norway, and why most people these days leave their birthplaces in search of a new life. To be in two places at once, to never feel entirely at home, has become a privilege.

While much can be said for the persistence of those artists who appear to keep hammering at one nail, Parker and St Werner's dogged desire to have their ideas repeatedly challenged is refreshingly healthy. If you find a formula that works, don't patent it or repeat it – challenge and develop it. Look at Rhys Chatham (*Invisible Jukebox*, page 22). He played a decisive role in New York's 1970s downtown music scene; started learning the trumpet in mid-life; relocated to Paris; and is now rolling out a new Metal-inspired project, Essentialist. What better way to test your ideas than by working with people outside your immediate circle?

Speaking of immediate circles, we'd like to introduce the latest member of *The Wire* massive. Derek Walmsley, who also contributes this month's illuminating Dubstep Primer (page 42), will be manning the controls as Reviews Editor from this month. Velkommen, as we say back home.

ANNE HILDE NESET

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Letters

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Learning to cope with censorship

Thank you very much for Peter Rehberg's tribute to Cabaret Voltaire and their profound and experimental application of film and video during the early 1980s (*Epiphanies*, *The Wire* 277).

Cabaret Voltaire were one of the first groups whose records I started to collect seriously while still in high school. They were also the major catalyst in my ongoing interest in experimental electronic music. Whereas Peter Rehberg had difficulties finding obscure records growing up in St Albans, UK, it was many times more difficult collecting obscure records in apartheid South Africa during a period of extreme censorship during the 1980s. Johannesburg's Street Records was a local institution during this period. Not just records but even information about record releases and new bands was difficult to obtain. With no Internet or independent/pirate radio, all information was obtained from the NME and Melody Maker or via word of mouth. Because copies of the music weeklies were sent by sea they arrived on our newsstands roughly three months behind their publication date.

John Ackerman, the owner of Street Records, was a defiant and courageous man with a great love for music. He would, however, assist anyone in ordering their favourite records as long as these records fell outside of mainstream taste. He often had trouble with UK suppliers when they found out he was South African and would therefore suffer shipment delays or cancellations. On the occasions he had no supplier he would personally travel to the UK and source the records himself, bringing the special ones back in his suitcase. By doing so he would be running the risk of being detained by our security police for being in possession of subversive propaganda material, as it was viewed by the Nationalist government at the time. I was present in his shop when he received visits from undercover, plain clothed security policemen who had the power to confiscate any records and videos they deemed subversive. They could do so without explanation and even the shop owner or assistants were unable to challenge the will of the State. These items were often destroyed or never returned.

The three videos by Cabaret Voltaire which I still own today were originally confiscated by security police and then returned to the shop in 1986. Johnny

Yes No, Doublevision Presents Cabaret Voltaire and Gasoline In Your Eye are all original Doublevision/Ikon/Virgin releases, and possibly some of the very few copies that ever made it to South Africa. I treasure these videos and still believe them to be truly innovative whilst retaining their original subversive undercurrent and character, evident even when viewed today. Cabaret Voltaire and particularly Richard H Kirk have not only had a profound impact on my teenage years growing up in South Africa but still influence my philosophies and thinking today.

I would like to thank Peter Rehberg for bringing Cabaret Voltaire's short but pivotal contribution to independent television to the fore, the members of Cabaret Voltaire for inspiring change and challenging the status quo of the time, and *The Wire* for consistently producing the finest and most thought provoking music magazine of our generation.

Warren Siebrits Johannesburg, South Africa

Advocating accuracy

Thank you for the review of Tony Oxley & Derek Bailey's *The Advocate* (Soundcheck, *The Wire* 278, where the reviewer ponders why the 1977 recording has not been released earlier). The Advocate has not been issued before as it was only finished in June last year at the Barbican by myself and John Zorn, the last track being a dedication to Derek Bailey for his work in the 1970s – the last track was only made then. It's a drum solo with electronics by me.

Tony Oxley Cologne, Germany

Colour coded

Thanks to Tom Perchard for his thoughtful review of my book *Lee Konitz: Conversations On The Improviser's Art* (Print Run, *The Wire* 278). He's clearly read the book carefully and makes some good and subtle points. There's just one I'd like to take up – about the 'whiteness' of Konitz's playing contexts. Clearly this is significant, though Konitz did work – and produced classic recordings – with Miles Davis, Charles Mingus, Art Taylor, Kenny Clarke, Elvin Jones, Philly Joe Jones and Rufus Reid. Behind the comment, though, I hear a version of the familiar objection that Konitz's playing – and Tristano's and Marsh's – is cerebral and passionless, that he has a pure, classical ('white') sound. As I tried to argue, 'cerebral' he may be but the rest is very much

mistaken. Konitz has a real jazz sound, because unavoidably for a jazz player of his and maybe any generation, his models and inspirations were African-American – Lester Young and Charlie Parker. The same applies to Lennie Tristano.

Andy Hamilton via email

Light on text

I appreciate Keith Moliné's positive review of *Text Of Light*'s Rotterdam 1 CD (Soundcheck, *The Wire* 278). However, the quote (taken from our Website) that he finds to be "more a disclaimer than a mission statement" is not a mission statement at all, as it does not date from the inception of the group – it's a more recent response, rather than a pre-emptive measure, to those who have confused the group's 'premise' (to have the audience watch and listen to improvisation as a parallel activity to watching a film in a concert situation) with the hoary idea of a silent film screening with musical accompaniment – a misconception which I suspect has 'always' led many, like Moliné, to be 'suspicious' of the concept.

Furthermore, his assertion that "an audio document of a *Text Of Light* event may seem to offer only half the story" also strikes me as odd – couldn't one say the same thing about *Frampton Comes Alive?* A *Text Of Light* 'event' is a concert that includes the screening of a film. Any recording only offers an audio document of what happened during a live performance. Part of what *Text Of Light* is trying to articulate is that while both the music and the films can stand on their own, there are surprising connections when they're juxtaposed, in terms of rhythm, motion, and formal abstraction, not the supposedly 'genuine', predetermined connections made when someone scores music to a film.

Alan Licht via email

Bring on the noise

I really liked the Maja Ratkje interview (*The Wire* 278). As someone who is one step away from buying an extra computer or a four-track to make noise, I found this article very encouraging. It's great to see interviews with people this generous about their creativity. As ever, the coverage of all the different areas of noise is inspiring and I live in hope of a big interview or Primer on Whitehouse in *The Wire*.

Zenon Gradkowski via email

The Wire 280

The June issue of *The Wire* will be on sale from 24 May.

www.thewire.co.uk

New items on *The Wire* site this month include music and video from cover stars Von Südenfeld, exclusive MP3s from Rhys Chatham, Strategy and Carlos Giffoni, an audio excerpt from this month's Invisible Jukebox with Rhys Chatham, video clips and more. Sign up to The Conduit, our fortnightly e-newsletter, at www.thewire.co.uk.

Adventures In Modern Music on Resonance 104.4 FM

A weekly show of new music hosted by *The Wire* staff, broadcasting across Central London on 104.4 FM every Thursday, 8–9:30pm GMT, with simultaneous streaming at www.resonancefm.com.

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MGR vs SIR DSS

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Neurot

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CURRENT 93

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Southern Lord

Double disc set featuring "Within The Dream" - a documentary on the band by acclaimed visual artist Seldon Hunt, and a CD with 3 classics from the band rerecorded in their new clean, stark tone and a remix of their 2005 opus "A Plague Of Angels".



KIT

"Broken Voyage" CD/LP
Upset The Rhythm

Fast, short, jagged no-wavey pop sounds from members of XBNRX, Hawkeye Troop and Snowsuit. Available on both formats from the scenemakers at Upset The Rhythm.



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"Given To The Rising" CD, 2LP, Limited edition CD
Neurot

The ninth studio album from the Bay Area innovators, and their first to be released worldwide entirely on their own imprint. A dense, aggressive, claustrophobic ritual recalling the heaviness of their earlier works with the sonic attention to detail of their recent output.



SILVESTER ANFANG

"Kasmeis Slachtafval" CD
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After a slew of vinyl only releases and CDs comes the first full length CD from the mysterious Flemish cult. Dark funeral folk and post-krautrock jams from deep in the woods of Flanders. As mind altering and unsafe as trappist brewing methods.



LITTLE ANNIE

"Songs From The Coal Mine Canary" CD
Durro Jnana

Little Annie (aka Annie Anxiety) teams up with Antony (of Antony & The Johnsons fame) to bring us an album of stirring torch songs and piratical odes...



MICHAEL CASHMORE

"The Snow Abides" CD
Durro Jnana

5 track mini album mixing orchestrated music composed by Michael Cashmore with lyrics and texts specially written by David Tibet and sung by Antony Hegarty of Antony & The Johnsons.



LICHENS

"Omnis" CD
Kranky

Rob Lowe (90 Day Men, TV On The Radio) returns with his follow-up to 2005's "Psychic Nature Of Being" - a CD/DVD set this time around. More beautifully crafted pastoral drone poems and layered acoustic alchemy.



CHRIS CONNELLY

"The Episodes" CD
Durro Jnana

Ex Finifribe alumna Connolly is joined by Joan of Arc's Tim Kinsella, Town & Country's Ben Vida (who also produced the record) & members of US Maple, Califone and other Chicago jazz and improv luminaries for an outing of personal, impressionistic pop.



VALET

"Blood Is Clean" CD
Kranky

Honey Owens (aka Valet) makes her debut for Kranky after years with JACKIE O MOTHERFUCKER and NUDGE... total expansive psychic dreamscapes and guitar fried freakouts - like a one woman No Neck Blues Band. Heavy.



DEERHUNTER

"Fluorescent Grey" CD
Kranky

Atlanta visionaries follow their critically acclaimed full length with a brand new four track CD w/ bonus video for "Strange Light". "Memorable melodies and an awkward, charismatic narrator are often peeking from behind the dissonance-laden mists that self-consciously clothe them" Pitchfork 8.9/10



STRATEGY

"Future Rock" CD
Kranky

Nudge/Fontanelle luminary Paul Dickow (aka STRATEGY)'s most complex, primitive, ambitious, and dare we say it, pop album to date. Mixing his trademark dabbling in headphone-oriented ambient, house and dub into one coherent package.

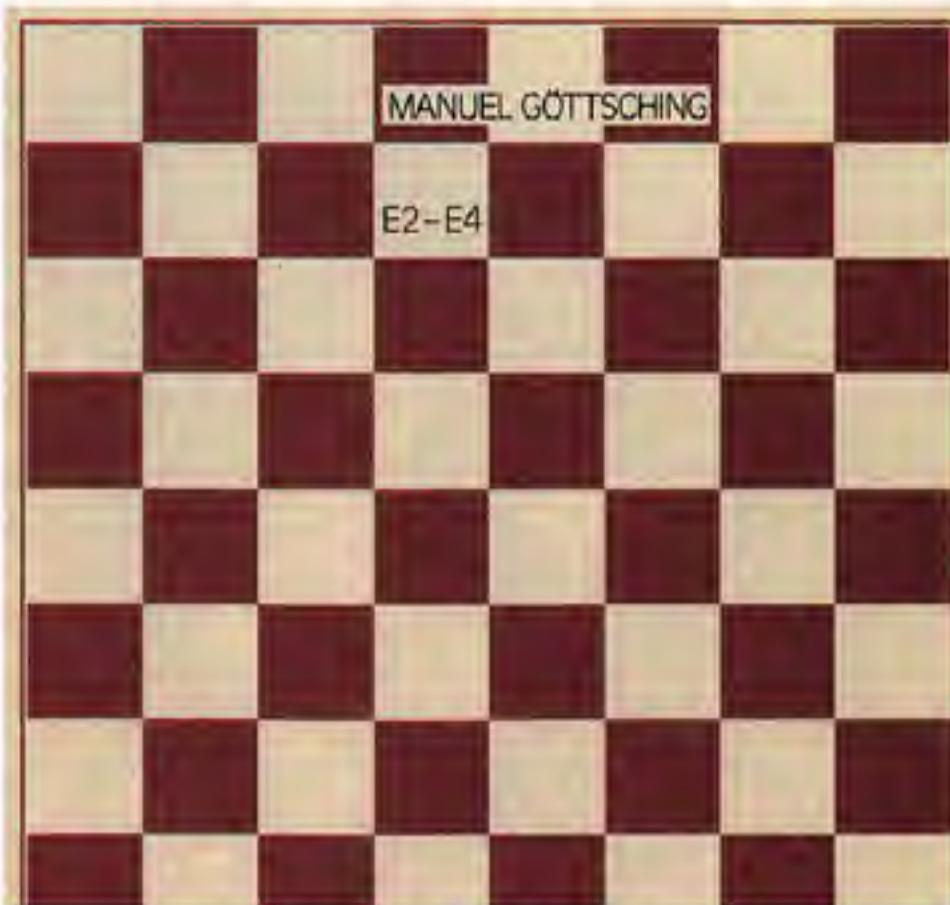
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Bitstream News and more from under the radar



Homage or rip-off? The real E2-E4 (left) and LCD Soundsystem's 45:33

Former Ash Ra Tempel guitarist **Manuel Göttsching** has released a press statement condemning **LCD Soundsystem** and Nike for the "plagiarism" of the cover art from his 1984 album *E2-E4* by the group for their track "45:33". Publicity images of the track, which lasts just over 45 minutes and is ostensibly designed for working out in the gym, feature a grey and white check design which Göttsching claims is inspired by the chessboard design featured on *E2-E4* (the title a reference to an opening move in chess). He says he has attempted to contact LCD Soundsystem over the issue, but the group's management deny claims that the cover was directly inspired by Göttsching's work. Murphy, the press release continues, is reported to be "upset" over the controversy, being a Göttsching fan, but neither the group nor their label have any plans to discuss the matter further, apparently. Göttsching's piece has itself been appropriated numerous times over the years. *E2-E4*, recently released as a 25th anniversary edition, formed the basis for the late 80s Balearic dance classic "Sueno Latino" by Sueno Latino, and was later remixed by Carl Craig. www.ashra.com

At the time of going to press, musicians have been launching protests against the closure of New York venue **Tonic**. A pillar of the city's downtown New Music scene for the last nine years, the space has been unable to afford a series of rent increases imposed by their landlords and officially closed its doors on 14 April. Protesters are asking for political intervention to safeguard a central location for jazz/ avant/indie music performance, pointing to the success of European funding for arts and music projects. The Tonic stage has been home to hundreds of performers including John Zorn and Derek Bailey, and the venue prides itself on paying a large proportion of its door receipts to the artists themselves. The threat to its operation follows the recent closure of other downtown venues such as CBGB's and Sin-e. Further information is available at www.takeittothebridge.com

This year's **Sónar Festival** – supported by The Wire – has announced its line-up. Held in Barcelona between 14–16 June, acts include Jeff Mills, Dizzee Rascal, Mira Calix, Charles Hayward and Wolf Eyes, among a host of international DJs and electronic artists. A Radio 1 dubstep showcase features artists such as Skream, Oris Jay and Kode9 & The Spaceape. www.sonar.es



Meanwhile, Bristol's **Venn Festival** enters its fourth year this May, with performances and activities across the city from 31 May–3 June. The line-up includes Japanese faux naïf avant rock ensemble Maher Shalal Hash Baz, Faust getting a live sonic makeover from Nurse With Wound collaborator Colin Potter, Stephen O'Malley & Pita's KTL duo and Finnish folk/avant pop collective Paavoharju. www.vennfestival.com

Eugene Robinson, vocalist with American hardcore ensemble **Oxbow**, will publish a book on extreme fighting later this year, called *Fight: Or, Everything You Ever Wanted To Know About Ass-Kicking But Were Afraid You'd Get Your Ass Kicked For Asking*. Robinson is said to be an accomplished fighter himself, and the vocalist's frequently half-naked performances with Oxbow have added to the sometimes confrontational atmosphere of their concerts. Oxbow perform at the Supersonic Festival in Birmingham in July. www.theoxbow.com

'A representative from Corwood Industries', aka **Jandek**, cements his status as the hardest working recluse in showbusiness with the announcement of his first performance in Boston, Massachusetts. The Texan outsider artist appears at the city's Institute of Contemporary Art on 8 June, accompanied by local improvisors including Greg Kelley (trumpet), Jorrit Dijkstra (alto sax) and Eli Kesler (percussion). www.icaboston.org



Mira Calix

The future of **Arthur Magazine**, the music, politics and underground culture journal whose contributors include The Wire's Byron Coley and Sonic Youth's Thurston Moore, appears to be in limbo after its 26th issue was cancelled. Discussions between publishers and editors over the bi-monthly magazine's future are continuing, and articles due for inclusion in the magazine – including pieces from Greg Saunier of Deerhoof as well as Moore and Coley's regular round-up of underground records and rumblings – are featured on the magazine's still active Website. Watch this space. www.arthurmag.com



Colleen

The second edition of the UK's **Faster Than Sound** festival has just been announced. The day-long event showcases electronic music and sound experiments in digital art forms, with installations, musical collaborations, a wireless walk in the woods and performances by Haswell & Hecker, Mira Calix & Tansy Davies, Mu-Ziq, Modified Toy Orchestra, DAT Politics, Colleen, Murcof and many more. The festival, supported by The Wire, takes place at the Bentwaters Airbase in Suffolk on 9 June. Info and tickets available from www.fasterthansound.com.

The curators of the **Unsound** festival in Krakow, Poland have started an online archive of **free mobile ringtones** from artists including alva noto, Atom Heart, Thomas Brinkmann, eRikm, Burnt Friedman, Luomo, Pan American, Telefon Tel Aviv and Stephen Vitiello. Justifiably describing itself as "the world's most interesting collection of mobile phone tones", Toneshared allows users to listen to MP3s before downloading for use on their phones. www.toneshared.com

The distributor of **Industrial Culture Handbook** has declared bankruptcy, cutting off a major source of revenue for the San Francisco RE/Search organisation, who publish the title. A limited edition hardback edition is now available direct from RE/Search at the special price of \$35, however. To order: info@researchpubs.com, call 001 415 362 1465, or visit www.researchpubs.com

As previewed in an earlier Bitstream, **Perverted By Language**, a collection of original fiction inspired by the songs of The Fall, has now been published by Serpent's Tail. Presented in chronological order of the tracks' release, the anthology begins with "Bingo Master's Break-Out" by Niall Griffiths and concludes with Rebecca Ray's "I Can Hear The Grass Grow", from The Fall's 2005 cover version of the same name. Other contributors include Robyn Hitchcock and Stewart Lee. www.serpentstail.com

The Deep Listening Institute, the organisation founded by Pauline Oliveros, has been awarded funds from the New York State Music Fund to spearhead a new project, the Deep Listening Convergence. The institute has invited 50 professional musicians and performers specialising in improvised music to take up an online residency to play, rehearse and form ensembles. The musicians will then converge for three concerts in Troy, Hudson and High Falls respectively, all in New York State. Artists have been rehearsing online through Deep Listening Institute's Convergence Website, using virtual tools to improvise, meet and interact. www.deeplistingening.org/site/convergence

A bass speaker from **King Tubby's** legendary late 60s Hometown Hi-Fi sound system has sold on eBay for more than \$600. The speaker was apparently found at a yard in Water House near to Tubby's studio at 38 St Lucia Road by eager reggae record hunters. The buyer is reportedly a collector from Bristol, UK, who runs the vintage sound system hire company, Trax On Wax.



Ornette Coleman

Cecil Taylor and **Ornette Coleman** will be among the first artists to perform at London's newly refurbished Royal Festival Hall when it reopens this summer. On 8 July, a stellar quartet of Taylor, Anthony Braxton, William Parker and Tony Oxley will put the hall's redesigned acoustics to the test, followed on 9 July by a performance of The Ornette Coleman Quartet, featuring his son Denardo on drums.

www.southbankcentre.co.uk

To coincide with **Tony Conrad's** London performance at St Giles-in-the-Fields Church on 1 June, the Curzon Soho cinema will be showing a complementary programme of Conrad films including *The Flicker*, to be shown on 3 June. A Selection of Finnish short films completes the bill. www.no-signal.net

Dubstep and Grime audio file hosting site **Barefiles.com** appears to have gone offline after being unable to resolve disputes with record labels over hosting material for download. When it was last operational, Barefiles hosted MP3 archives of more than 500 DJ sets, mostly culled from London pirate radio station broadcasts, and was instrumental in spreading dubstep and Grime outside the UK.

Bloomington, Indiana label **Secretly Canadian** celebrates its 11th anniversary with the release of its 100th album this April. SC100 will be a two disc set featuring 18 artists from the label performing covers of each other's songs. Who covered who was decided randomly by pulling names out of a hat. To date Secretly Canadian has released albums from artists such as Swell Maps, Songs: Ohia, Loren Connors and Antony & The Johnsons. www.secretlycanadian.com

Austrian laptop pioneer **Christian Fennesz** and Fantômas mastermind frontman **Mike Patton** hook up for a European tour in May and June. Patton and Fennesz will share the stage for a string of performances, beginning in Germany and concluding in Israel, that promise Krautrock landscapes, mellotron echoes and stormy drones. www.ipc.ac

American clarinet player **Tony Scott** died on 28 March in Rome at the age of 86. The cause was prostate cancer. Scott won four successive Down Beat polls in the 1950s for best clarinettist before touring South East Asia in the early 1960s. This excursion led to his playing in a Hindu temple, spending time in Japan and releasing an album entitled *Music For Zen Meditation* in 1964. His track "Hare Krishna" was reworked as a contribution to the Verve Remixed album which was released in 2002. □

Trip Or Squeek By Savage Pencil



www.Savagepencil.com

Smear campaign

By Philip Sherburne

A visitor to Paul Dickow's apartment in Portland, Oregon, phoning to be let in, may be met with an enthusiastic nonsequitur in lieu of a greeting. "I just made my guitar sound like a sitar using Audiomulch!" Yes, great, thanks, can you buzz me up now? Better known as Strategy, as well as a frequent DJ about town and the co-proprietor, alongside David Chandler (aka Solenoid and DJ Brokenwindow), of the unclassifiable Community Library label, Dickow specialises in shapeshifting: making his voice ring like an underwater banjo duel, say, or turning a spongy, dub-infused virtual jam session into something very much like a 'proper' House music record.

His new album Future Rock finds him at the height of his transformative powers, blending live percussion, heavily vocoded avant pop, swirlly disco, tape loops, House cadences and an omnipresent dub pulse, all swathed in spring reverb, into an exercise in smearing, as he likes to call it. "My friend Chris Herbert calls it tuned air," expands Dickow. "This sense you can take anything and give it a musicality. By way of obscuring it, leaving the edges incomplete, you're giving the impression of it without giving everything."

"That sense of liquidity, of music having form and density that isn't defined by edge or air in it, is really critical," he continues. "I can't stop it from happening. I don't know why; it's not overtly an obsession, it's just what happens when I work. Spring reverb is like that. Dub and reggae are a primary influence in that sense. All of a sudden the bass becomes blobbier, the drums become bigger, other elements disappear and reappear at will. It's a new sense of layering, but they're also creating a fake acoustic space. That smearing... Without a doubt, I'm of a generation of people for whom that experience of dub was formative."

Dickow grew up in Idaho's panhandle – that long, skinny, rugged portion of the state that makes Portland, 360 miles west, look like a glittering metropolis. Even in the pre-Internet 1980s, however, all kinds of alien culture beamed in via the local college radio station, where he hosted radio shows while still in high school. Through his father, a music professor and occasional composer of soundtracks for Idaho's public

television station, he discovered synthesizers and four-track recorders; a secondhand Farfisa nurtured his predilection for outmoded gear. Indeed, Dickow's studio is a mess of half-built modular synthesizers, primitive samplers and the like; much of the percussion on Future Rock was recorded on Jackie-O Motherfucker's gear stored at a friend's studio, while they were out on tour.

By the 90s, electronica was finding its way to the station through records by The Orb and Aphex Twin. "The odd thing about being in the middle of nowhere and being isolated and wondering what all this music meant," he recalls, "is that I made up my own meanings about where the culture was coming from. I had no idea about raves or clubs, I had no idea about how bands formed, no idea about anything."

In the mid-90s, Dickow spent a year in Missoula, Montana before going to college in Portland. "Coming here in 1995, it was still very isolated," he says. "If you weren't into indie rock, you were fucked. There was a rave scene at the time, but I had no access to it. If you weren't really invested [in the dominant local scene], noise music seemed like the perfect answer."

A thriving DIY scene and a network of communal houses led to a number of collaborations – Dickow played in Fontanelle with members of Jessamine and continues in Nudge with Brian Foote and Jackie-O Motherfucker's Honey Owens. "I moved in with Brian and Honey after the guys from Reanimator moved away and lived there for three years, and there were a lot of people who came to stay with us because we started throwing shows."

At the same time, Dickow began working solo. "I still had all those values about isolation breeding creativity and originality," he says. "I gravitated towards people that come from that. There's a lot of empathy for that experience and the understanding that there's a lot of accidental originality – you're just synthesizing from anything you can get your hands on."

Dickow's first album as Strategy, Strut (OMCO), works in just that way. Recorded live to minidisc

with an almost entirely hardware set-up, save a few tracks performed in Audiomulch, the album touches on a surprising array of sources – Sun Electric, Atom Heart, Pan Sonic, Carl Craig, Gescom – without overtly aping them. Nor does it settle in one place for long; all its inspirations are smeared into a viscous swirl of yawning envelopes and supersaturated space.

After 2004's more software-oriented Drumsolo's Delight and a couple of more overtly disco-oriented singles for Seattle's Orac label, Future Rock returns to the territory of Strut, but where that one sounded very much like a solo work, Future Rock evokes a collective joy – a rain-soaked funk jam session, heard from blocks away, smearing into a gamelan haze. "I think the new material sounds the most like my early cassette tapes, when I was trying to be a whole band on my own," ponders Dickow. "There was a time when I couldn't get a band together. To me, electronic music was always a way to role-play and be in more than one place at the same time."

Community Library, which he and Chandler launched in 2005, extends that idea of role-playing, running from the hardscrabble Techno of Eats Tapes and Reanimator to the freeform recordings of Evolutionary Jass Band and Project Perfect. The label grew out of a themed DJ night the two began in 2003. "You might have songs only about something like Vices, Crime and Justice, Eyes/Tears/Vision, and all the music might be from wildly different genres," says Dickow. "It was a way of saying, 'See, this all belongs together, but not on the level you would guess at first glance.' In our music community at large between 1999 and 2003, it's like everyone was pulling in different directions at the same time, trying to be in as many musical places as possible – playing in different bands, DJing variety sets that might meander in style, whatever."

"A logical extension of this was to start a label demonstrating the excitement that exists there," he concludes, "that there are always people who are coming and going between genres, and their music tends to be dynamic and strange as a result." □

Future Rock is out now on Kranky

Community Librarian: Strategy's Paul Dickow



Strategy

THE LEAF LABEL MAY 2007

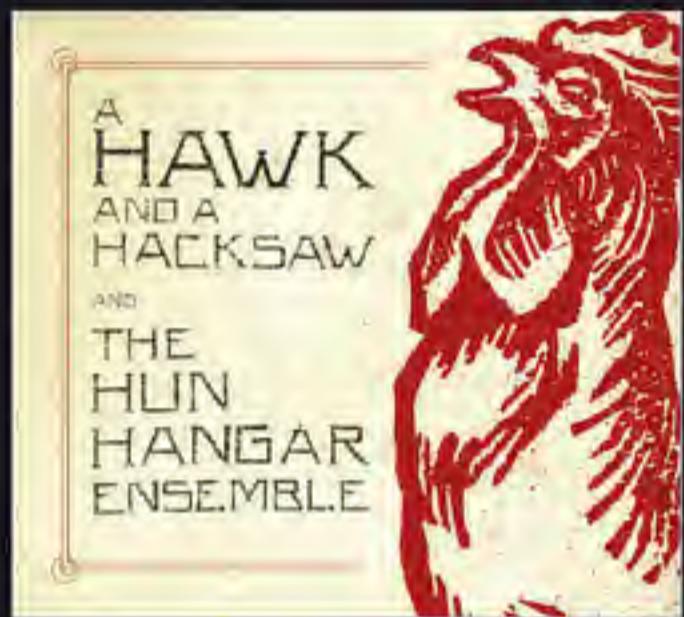


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 - Sat 5 May Cube Cinema, BRISTOL*
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Scrapbook of sighs

By Julian Cowley

"Since I was a kid I've always had this urge to develop a deeply personal musical voice," says pianist Sylvie Courvoisier. She has pursued her goal with increasing concentration since she moved nine years ago from her native Switzerland to her current home in New York. Her success in achieving a distinctive voice as a performer and a composer is evident from two new releases. *Lonelyville* (Intakt) is a taut, dramatic quintet set featuring her husband Mark Feldman playing violin and Ikue Mori on computer, along with drummer Gerald Cleaver and cellist Vincent Courtois. *Signs And Epigrams*, out soon on John Zorn's Tzadik label, is her first solo piano disc.

"*Lonelyville* is the first record where I've really managed to combine noise making, contemporary classical elements, grooves, conventional and unconventional aspects of the piano," she remarks. "It's pretty much notated but I allowed windows for improvisation. I wrote the pieces, then developed them over a lengthy period in consultation with the other group members and through rehearsal. It took time for everyone to find their own room and feel comfortable within the music. It's quite architectural." *Signs And Epigrams*, recorded in New York last December, presents a selection of Courvoisier's piano studies and some of her conceptually structured improvisations. Essentially, it's a distillation of her work until now, with composition and improvising in a complementary or symbiotic relationship. "When I write or practise, every idea gets noted down in my music notebook," she explains. "Even 'technical' exercises. Lately I've been working on sequences of intervals, developing these sequences by using a 'pivot' method... that means I choose one note as

the pivot of a sequence, then evolve from that note using different methods: inversion, permutation, retrograde, mirrors... I use this 'scrapbook' material when writing but also when improvising."

In addition to this methodical self-scrutiny, Courvoisier extends and enriches her playing through collaboration – she's currently a member of John Zorn's Cobra as well as groups led by trumpeter Herb Robertson and veteran multi-instrumentalist Yusef Lateef. "When I play with Yusef I try to enter his soundworld and converse with him," she says. "And when I'm playing with John Zorn I'm conversing with him. It feels natural to do that and those conversations feed my own vocabulary." Zorn has been an energetic, catalytic presence in Courvoisier's life in recent years. At his instigation, she and Feldman have recorded two albums of Zorn compositions, *Masada Recital* (2004) and *Malphas* (2006). But she readily acknowledges that his impact has been far more pervasive. "John is always pushing," she says. "When a project is finished he immediately asks, 'What are you going to do next?' Without him I would have done something but I wouldn't have done so much."

In Courvoisier's early years as a musician in Switzerland she received encouragement from other pianists, notably Jacques Demierre, one of her teachers, and Irène Schweizer, who was always supportive, attending gigs and offering advice. Schweizer wasn't a direct stylistic influence but Courvoisier profoundly admires her playing and her integrity. Since moving to New York, Courvoisier has come to value highly the musical associations

she has made there. She has worked with Ikue Mori for seven years in various groups; with Zorn; and with Danish saxophonist Lotte Anker, most notably in Mephisto, their scintillating trio with drummer Susie Ibarra. Mori's enigmatic electronics stretch the limits of her own playing, says Courvoisier; she has often been inspired during their performances to modify the piano, inserting objects between its strings to generate other timbres and textures in response to Mori's promptings.

Her creative partnership with Mark Feldman is of still longer standing and raises other challenges. "The violin and the piano have a history together," she notes. "We try to work around that and arrive at our own language." Their success in at once acknowledging and circumventing tradition is illustrated well by Abaton (ECM), their 2003 trio recording with cellist Erik Friedlander. It presents four Courvoisier compositions and 19 improvisations that display the subtle and refined interaction amongst them and their astute negotiation with history. It's music that's resonant with precedent yet it achieves singularity.

A less tangible yet nonetheless real input into Courvoisier's music comes from her interest in French literature – from writers such as St John Perse, Simone de Beauvoir, Jean-Paul Sartre, Antonin Artaud and Georges Bataille. "When I'm writing a lot of music I find that I'm reading a lot as well," she observes. "I always read in silence. Reading is like a silent world. From there things find their way into sound, into my music. I don't know how those worlds are connected, but they are." □

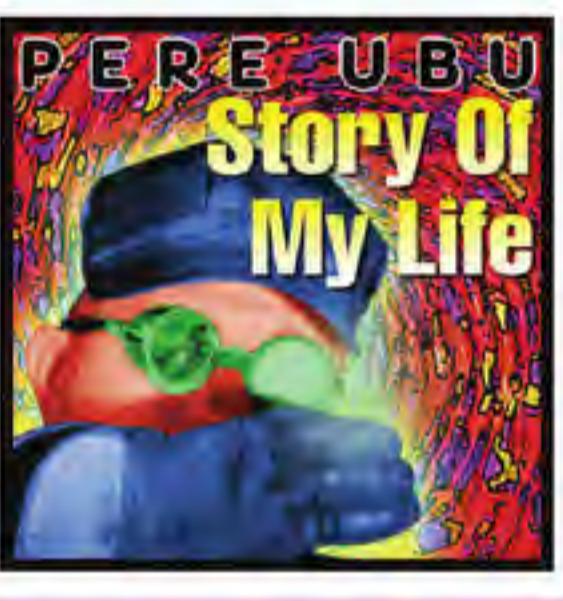
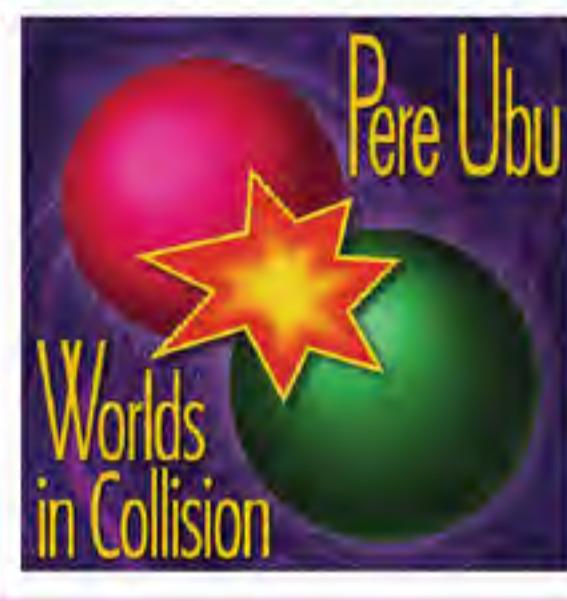
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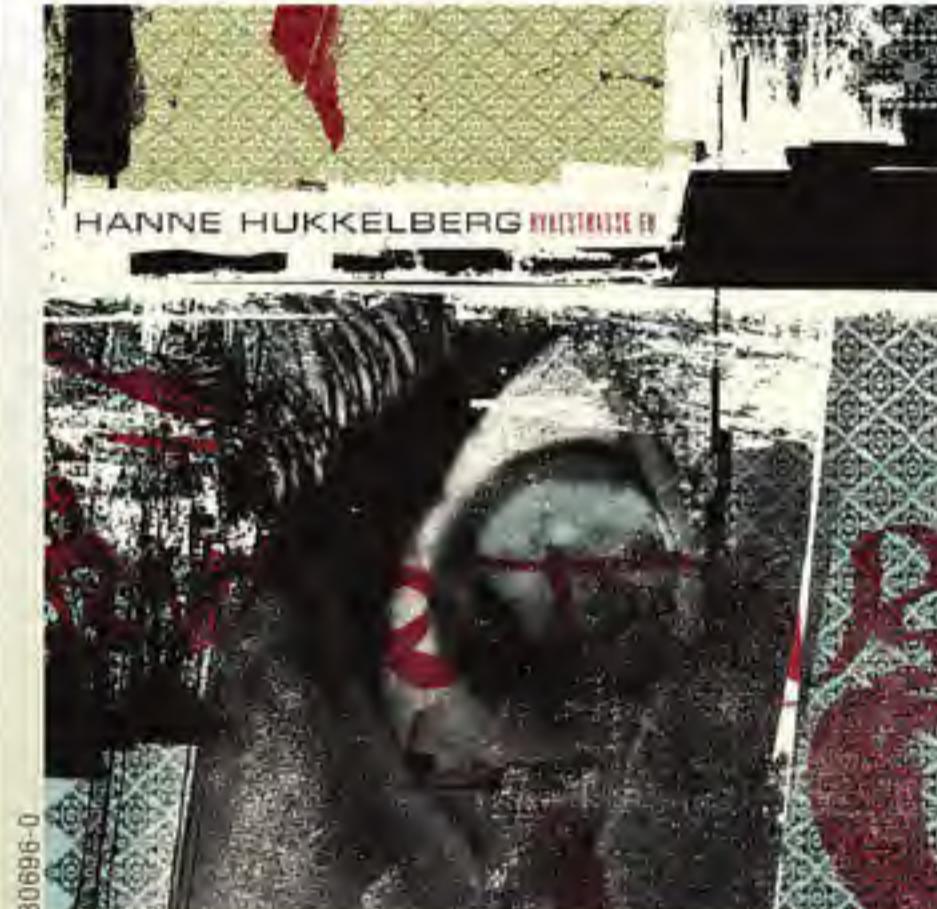


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Arrogant chaos By Marc Masters



No Fun around here: Carlos Giffoni

"I don't think of myself as arrogant," says Carlos Giffoni, discussing Arrogance, his new solo CD. "But often people refer to this kind of music as arrogant, because it can be so extreme and so loud. The title is also about not trying to impress anyone, and just doing something that's fulfilling to me. Arrogance is an emotion like that, where you accomplish things for yourself whether or not people might be happy with it."

There is a definite personal bent to Arrogance, the first Giffoni record made alone in his home studio and released on his own No Fun label. The album's dense, detailed noise reflects meticulous toil. Yet Arrogance is also open and impulsive, straddling the line between improvisation and composition. "I know what a piece will be like when I start playing it," he explains, "but there are always things that I try without knowing what the result will be. I wanted to make a record that was beautiful in certain ways, but also very hard to listen to."

Such juxtapositions – structure with impulse, beauty with harshness – mark all of Giffoni's work. His sculpted sounds carry a precision rare for music so aggressive. It's a style he perfected on 2005's Welcome Home, a collection of pointed pieces honed over a number of years. On Arrogance, that approach persists, despite a major instrumental shift. Having previously worked primarily with computers and electronics, Giffoni spent last year exclusively with analogue synthesizers. He found their limitations paradoxically liberating. "With computers, I usually know what will happen," he admits. "With analogue, it's easier to get something more unexpected. I can see the entire set-up, so I try something, and then see another module and think, 'That might be a little different.' Having those limited options all in front of me made me try new things."

Giffoni has been experimenting for more than a decade. He grew up playing punk rock in Venezuela, but after moving to Miami at age 18 in 1996, he quickly encountered the noise underground. "I took

an advanced math class while studying computer science, and Adris Hoyos [of noise legends Harry Pussy] sat behind me and would ask me questions," he recalls. "I didn't know who Harry Pussy was before that." Soon, he joined Monotrack, a noise-rock trio that remains active, recently releasing the jagged Xprmntl Lvrs via Thurston Moore's Ecstatic Peace. "It's the only project I've had for this long," says Giffoni. "It was really what got me into stranger music. When I first toured with Monotrack, I got to see all these different bands and cities." That led him to New York, where he and the rest of the group relocated in 2000. "New York felt like no other place in America, just from the energy that it had," he enthuses. "Its history, in music and art, is really amazing. So we said, 'We have to move to New York.'"

Since his migration, Giffoni's musical activity has gone into overdrive. It seems as if he has collaborated with just about every experimental artist who has ever set foot in Manhattan, from Sonic Youth to Dylan Nyoukis to Pita. He also masterminds Brooklyn's No Fun Fest, which through three wildly successful annual instalments has become a sort of international noise conference. "Coming here from Miami, where exposure to international musicians is almost zero, it changed my mentality," Giffoni asserts. "If I had stayed there, there's no way I would be doing all the things I do now. I wouldn't have done the Fest, I wouldn't have toured Europe and Japan."

Drawing on those new connections, Giffoni in 2004 formed Death Unit with drummers Trevor Tremaine of Hair Police and Chris Corsano, and Mouthus guitarist Brian Sullivan. "I wanted a band that would be a noisy version of free jazz – more visceral, and more evil," he declares. The group's latest release, Infinite Death (Important), fulfills that ambition. Its opening track, a 14 minute jam recorded at Sonic Youth's now defunct Echo Canyon studio, offers a breathless sprint through grinding electronics, crashing drums and stomach-churning

Carlos Giffoni

guitar noise, all of which move organically through tonal changes and momentum shifts. "Even though it's improvised, there is always a direction," he insists. "We'll say, 'These are the parts we're going to play, and we're going to do these things for this certain amount of time.'"

Giffoni has also found time for an endless string of collaborations. In 2005 he visited Norway to record with Fe-Mail (Maja Ratkje & Hild Sofie Tafjord), who share his knack for structure mixed with abstraction. The result, Northern Stains (Important), is a busy, bubbling electronic maze. "It was great to be able to record in their environment, in their studio with all their equipment," he says. "When you play with people like Fe-Mail, who change so often, it's always a total surprise. So the record is very strange and very different from anything I've done."

An even bigger surprise came when Giffoni played with longtime hero Merzbow during a trip to Japan last autumn. "He brought all analogue stuff, and it was the first time he's done a show like that since the late 1990s," he recollects. "I'm a fan of his computer work too, but to me the analogue work is his most interesting music." Two releases will come from the collaboration: a duo album called Synth Destruction on Important, and a trio recording with Jim O'Rourke titled Electric Dress on No Fun.

Those records are only a fraction of Giffoni's current plans. He's just released albums with Lasse Marhaug and Prurient, and works with Sudden Infant, Marcia Bassett and Monotrack are imminent. Forthcoming from No Fun are releases from Religious Knives, Burning Star Core and a four CD box set from Japanese harsh noise legends CCCC. But with Giffoni's solo work, the future is less certain – and that's how he prefers it. "I don't know what will interest me, and that's what makes it fun," he maintains. "If I knew exactly what I was going to do for the next ten years, it would be boring, and I wouldn't want to do it." □ Arrogance is out now on No Fun. Death Unit's Infinite Death is on Important

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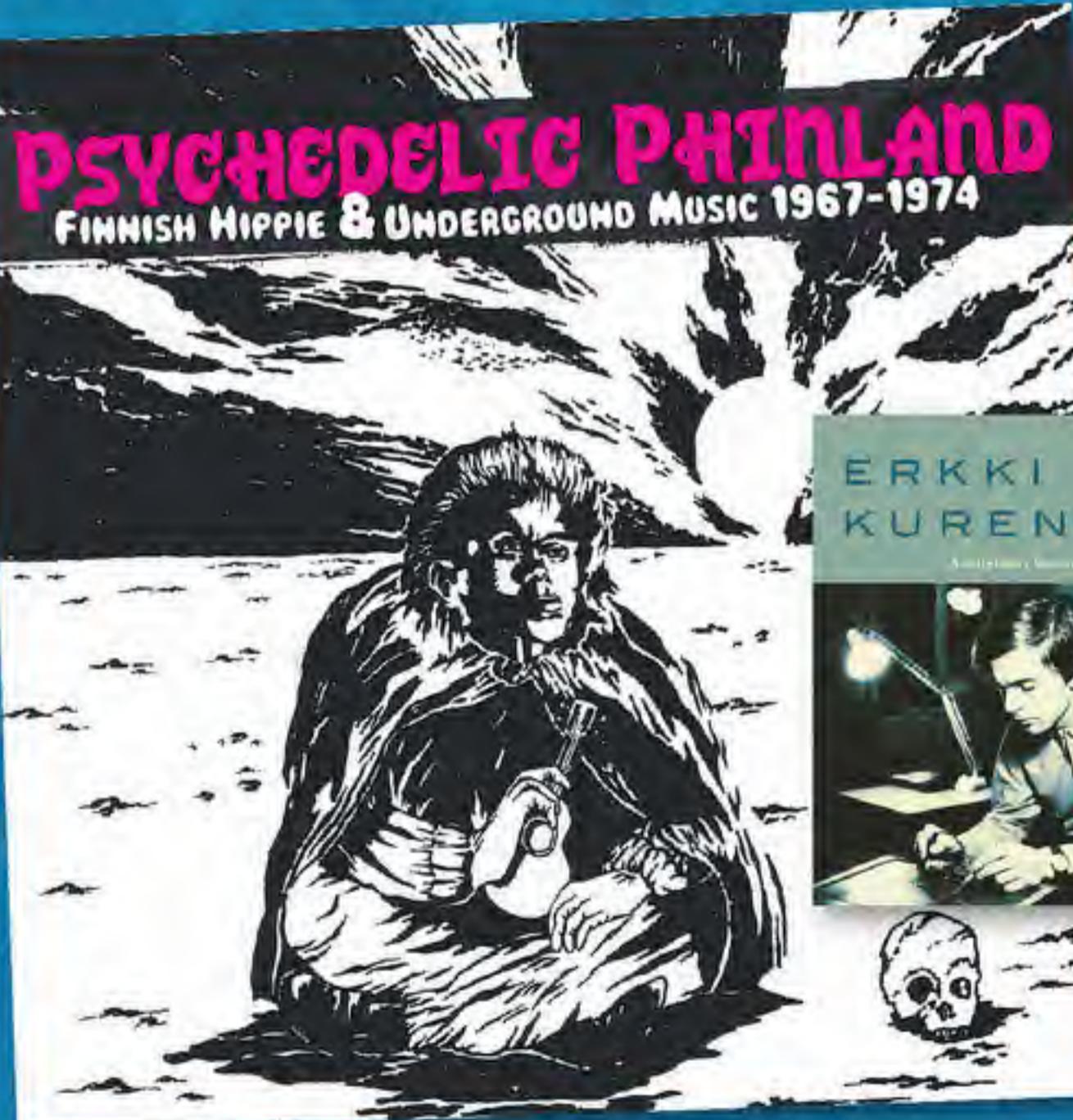
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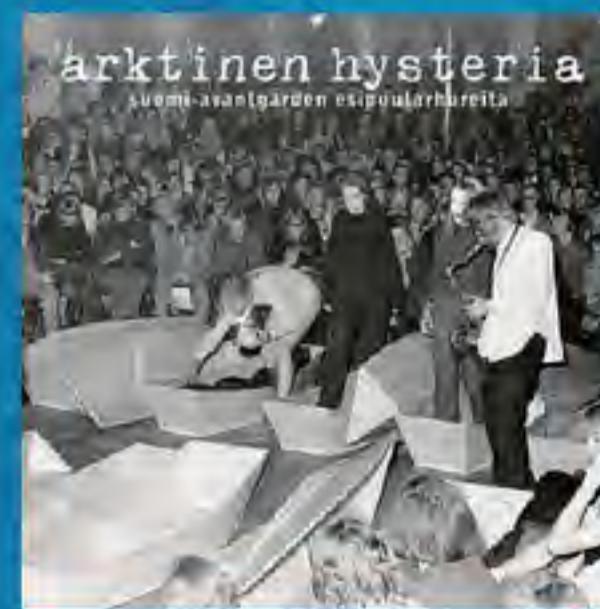
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Global Ear Budapest

On the last Friday of each month, Magyar Palatkai – a group from Romania's Transylvanian Heath – head west to Fono Dance House in Budapest. The septet, a mixture of both Roma and Hungarian musicians, play strictly in the style of the northern part of Transylvania. Consisting of three violins, three bratch (bowed three-string viola) and bowed bass, Magyar Palatkai's sound and ensemble playing reflect that of rural village life. Each instrument is utterly dependent on the other, and the collective sound of the seven men creates the beauty and strength of the music. Their songs are quite long and made for dancing, and the unison playing defies logic. Instant composition also comes into play, as they must appease the dancers, and certain melodies fit into certain dance styles from neighbouring villages and other parts of Transylvania. The dancers, who are mostly younger and from Budapest, come in droves for this monthly session with the masters. As the music slowly rolls into life, the dancefloor begins to spin with couples, crying out to each other, commenting on the music. Later, the men begin a percussive solo accompaniment to the music, slapping their boots and thighs in a wild blur, at once playing with the musicians as well as trying to outdo each other in syncopation and rhythmic complexity.

Magyar Palatkai sell burned CDs and DVDs at their concerts. The DIY attitude and presentation of their merchandise is a world away from the nauseating slickness that the 'World Music' industry usually offers. During the intermission, one of the musicians simply walks through the audience with a CD and a handful of change. The DVD on offer is particularly interesting: it shows the group in 1992 in their home village. As they play, a dog barks in the background, while the camera remains stoically focused on the musicians, revealing nothing of what happens beyond the frame. The youngest musician in this film (perhaps around 15 in 1992), who distractedly and haphazardly plays along, is now the primas, the successor in a long

line of violinists who start out as apprentices and grow into bandleaders.

The Hungarian folk ensemble Muszikas once compared Transylvania's cultural worth in Hungary to that of the Mississippi Delta in the USA, so its loss to Romania after the First World War was especially difficult to bear. This mountainous region is home to Hungarians, Saxons, Roma and Romanians (to clarify, in this article the term 'Roma' is used in place of the more commonly used 'Gypsy' – Roma and Hungarians don't really consider themselves Romanian, even if that is the country where their families have lived for generations). These disparate cultures have intermingled to create the most fertile folk culture in all of Europe. Transylvania was where Béla Bartók's pre-First World War folk song collecting was most fruitful. During the communist era, Hungarian culture in the region was strictly oppressed by the Romanian government, so an underground scene evolved where it could flourish. This scene then came to Budapest, where the rural folk forms were quickly embraced in the 1970s, and the 'dance house' scene was started. These days, there are traditional dance houses across the city, playing acoustically to a new generation of Hungarians whose musical interests expand beyond Transylvania to include Wallachian music from Romania, Serbia brass, traditional Hungarian Roma music, as well as Bulgarian and Turkish styles. It's not that far a reach, considering that Budapest was part of the Ottoman Empire for over 150 years. Its legacy can still be seen in the city's Turkish baths and Turkish coffee.

On Kiraly Utca (the former main street of Budapest), in the traditional Jewish quarter, a group of young Jewish artists have founded Siraly, a cafe and venue that showcases some of the best young musicians in Budapest. They are well aware of Judaism's mark on the city, which was nicknamed 'Judapest' in the late 19th century by the anti-Semitic mayor of Vienna, who was greatly admired by Hitler. The walls of Siraly are decorated with images of

another time: Hasidic Jews going to the synagogue, and walking down Kiraly Utca in the 1920s. In the basement you can hear a Serbian brass band from Budapest, or David Yengabarian, an Armenian accordionist who is developing and adapting Astor Piazzolla's bandoneon style for his own purposes.

The Istvan Szilvasi Gypsy Band often play here to a mixed and jubilant crowd. Their style is characterised by strange vocalisations that resemble scatting, and a rhythmic gallop at high speed, produced by a percussionist who uses a common water jug to approximate the sound of a darbuka or tabla. He also manages to articulate basslines by closing the mouth of the jug with his fist or open palm. This young Roma group sound nothing like the schmaltz heard over goulash in the many cafes of Budapest. They are creating a new mix of Roma music: elements of their style come from the Szabolcs-Szatmar county in the north of Hungary, as well as from Romania, Russia and the Vlach Roma idiom. They have also incorporated Christian songs into their repertoire, completely transforming them in the process. Istvan Szilvasi himself is also blessed with a great crooning voice that floats easily above fast tempos and general insanity. At Istvan Szilvasi's concerts, the divide between Hungarian Roma and Gadje (non-Roma) is broken, something that is not often seen in Romania, the Czech Republic or elsewhere in the European Union.

Back at Fono, Magyar Palatkai are done for the evening. They have a smoke outside and quickly gulp down a glass of beer. The stringed instruments are put back in their cases and they don their fedoras and evening jackets. Kissing women and shaking hands, they head to the van. The moon is out and the rural culture and past reverberates around the city; it is creating an urban and living folk music. □ If I Catch The Devil by The Istvan Szilvasi Gypsy Band is available through Fono. A Hawk And A Hacksaw And The Hun Hangár Ensemble begin their Contemporary Music Network tour of the UK on 5 May: see Out There

A survey of sounds from around the planet. This month: A Hawk And A Hacksaw's Jeremy Barnes hears Transylvania's disparate folk musics break cultural barriers



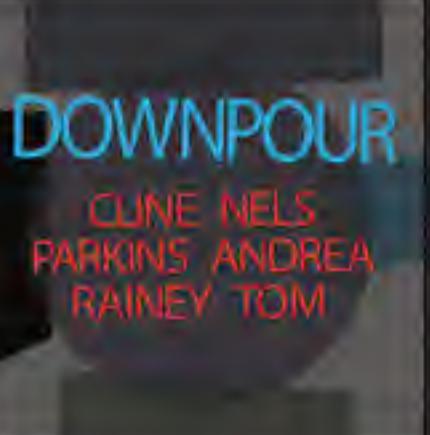
Transylvanian magic: Magyar Palatkai

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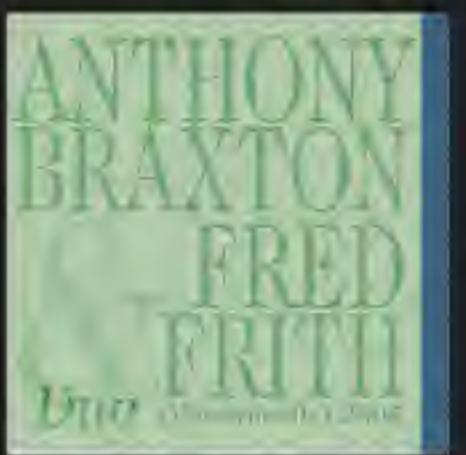
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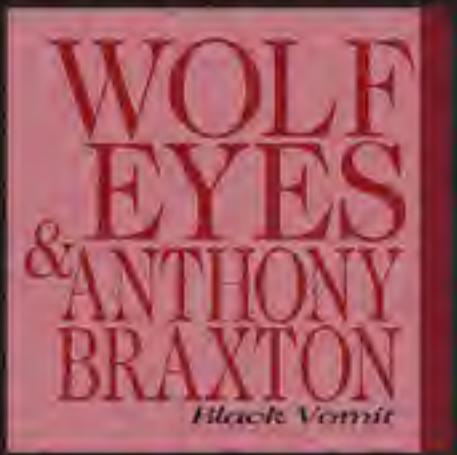
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Sound in other media

British film maker Derek Jarman's painterly Super-8 experiments are keys to examine the connection between the director and the music that inspired him. By Brian Dillon

In 1978, Derek Jarman – who had designed the sets for Ken Russell's 1971 film *The Devils* and more recently had acquired a certain notoriety with his first features as director, *Sebastiane* and *Jubilee* – was invited to screen his home movies at the London Film-Makers' Co-op. As the LFC's programmer at the time James Mackay recalls, Jarman arrived clutching a bag full of Super-8 reels and audio cassettes. Since the early 1970s, Jarman had been making intimate and poetic portraits of his friends and lovers, grainy studies of his home and studio in an old warehouse by the Thames at Bankside and luminous records of sojourns in the English countryside. "I had foolishly wished my films to be home," Jarman wrote later, "to contain all the intimacies". Now, says Mackay, who went on to become Jarman's producer, he proposed to soundtrack them with selections from David Bowie, Mahler, Tangerine Dream and Ravel. "Here's a really good one," he would declare, cueing up a particularly apt or affecting marriage of sound and dreamlike celluloid.

It's that spirit of improvisation, of the film screening as performance – as his confusion of gallery, cinema and stage – that makes him appear so pivotal today. 13 years after his death, Jarman's Super-8 experiments seem the most enduring and charged fragments of a body of work that included, alongside the feature films, diaries, essays, paintings and spectacles. They were also, as a number of current and forthcoming events confirm, perhaps the most suited to musical collaboration, elaboration, or apparently incongruous accompaniment. At Tate Modern this month, Throbbing Gristle will perform during a screening of some rarely seen films from the Super-8 archive. The event is billed less as a live soundtrack, more a collaboration between group and director.

Meanwhile, several of Jarman's home movies and mid-70s footage are included in two current London exhibitions tracing connections between art, punk and its subsequent discontents: *The Secret Public: The Last Days Of The British Underground* at the ICA, and *Panic Attack!* at the Barbican. Jarman's diaristic and painterly films now look like the real key to his work, and connect him again with the music and musical cultures that never ceased to inspire him.

In one sense, as James Mackay acknowledges today, each of the Super-8 films demands its own distinct soundtrack. Jarman never filmed them with specific music in mind, but they are structured so as to suggest certain rhythms. To conserve stock, he slowed the film down, then projected the result at an even slower speed to give a characteristically jerky but languid movement.

It's a mode that has a natural affinity with Brian Eno's Ambient works. "On Land is the music of my view," wrote Jarman in 1989, "a crescent moon, clouds scudding in the grey dawn." *Glitterbug* is soundtracked by Eno, giving the director's oneiric film journals a suitably elegiac cast. These are films that attest to a milieu later devastated by AIDS and the onset of a cultural chill in the 1980s that Jarman constantly resisted.

But the Super-8 films are not themselves simply melancholic, and the contexts in which Jarman himself reused them indicate also the exuberant scope of his musical interests. They feature in *Jubilee*, the 1977 film that portrays punk through the time travelling eyes of Queen Elizabeth I. They were cannibalised for *In The Shadow Of The Sun*, a film that originally matched their handheld blur to Verdi's *Requiem*, before Throbbing Gristle were commissioned to create a new soundtrack. Around the same time, Jarman, whose later videos for Pet Shop Boys and The Smiths are now better known, contrived a promo for Marianne Faithfull's desiccated 1979 comeback single, "Broken English", an austere compilation of footage of mid-20th century totalitarianism, with the singer herself a mere revenant, fading in and out of view. The video might as easily have matched a TG track.

There is a similar ghostliness to *The Angelic Conversation* (1985), a film that Jarman called "my most austere work, but also closest to my heart". Judi Dench reads Shakespeare's sonnets to a soundtrack by Coil, and the opening lines of Sonnet 53 might almost be directed at the image itself, or at its eerie musical mirror: "What is your substance, whereof are you made/That millions of strange shadows on you tend?" Here, the Super-8 footage turns abstract. Jarman's shots of beautiful young men – avatars of Shakespeare's mysterious beloved – constantly threaten to evanesce into a fog of film grain. The soundtrack is by turns pastoral and sinister, lyrical synthetic strings alternating with hissing and crackling electronics in a perfect analogy of the luminous but distorting surface of Jarman's images. It is as much a film about the alchemical properties of sound and celluloid as it is an evocation of the rough magic of desire.

In the 80s, Jarman's musical collaborations had become more intimate, but as Simon Fisher Turner recalls, no less open. Having met Jarman while working as a runner and driver on *The Tempest*, Fisher Turner found himself vetting prospective soundtrack composers for Caravaggio when the director asked, "why don't you do it?" Jarman was sure he wanted period instruments for his portrait of the Renaissance



Still from Derek Jarman's *The Angelic Conversation* (1985)

painter, but was otherwise quite willing to trust SFT's judgment. By the time of *Blue*, in 1993, "we barely talked about music at all", he muses.

At the end of the previous decade, Jarman had begun to conceive of a film about Yves Klein, or more specifically about the particular colour blue that features in several of the artist's monochrome paintings. The 'blank' film that was eventually made, with its wrenching voiceover account of Jarman's illness, existed first as a series of performances, the earliest of which involved 22 musicians performing Klein's *Symphonie Monotone* before a blue screen at the Lumière Cinema in London. Later, *Blue* became an avowedly personal and political work: at a subsequent performance, the gay activist group Outrage! provided an orchestra of whistles. The completed film is something closer to both painting and sound art. It owes a little to *Weekend*, the 1930 sonic city portrait that director Walter Ruttmann intended to be heard in front of a blank cinema screen. *Blue* conjures the sound of a cyclist passing perilously close as Jarman, his sight failing, strikes out across a London street. Time passes in the sound of countless ticking clocks and Jarman catches himself looking at shoes in a shop window: "I thought of going in and buying a pair, but stopped myself. The shoes I am wearing at the moment should be sufficient to walk me out of life."

What all this work suggests is a sensibility that shuttled constantly between reckless, gleeful experiment and a kind of muted English pastoral, "a politeness, possibly", as SFT puts it. Jarman was "very knowledgeable in terms of classical music", says the composer. His tastes had been formed by a middle-class, mid-century childhood and a profound feeling for the English countryside. Time and again in the Super-8 films you sense an artist for whom the sound and look of art, pleasure and politics was inseparable from his vision of nature, of calm and consoling rhythms as much as the giddy ones of the city and the club. And an artist who, as the actor Karl Johnson recalls in an interview appended to the DVD release of Jarman's *Wittgenstein*, frequently had one hand on a Dansette record player and the other on a spool of Super-8, "telling you that what you were about to see was the greatest film ever made". □ *The Secret Public* is at London ICA to 6 May. TG perform with Jarman's films on 26 May at Tate Modern. *Panic Attack! Art In The Punk Years* runs from 5 June–9 September at the Barbican. *Caravaggio*, *The Angelic Conversation* and *Wittgenstein* are available on BFI DVDs. *Blue* is released on DVD by Artificial Eye next month

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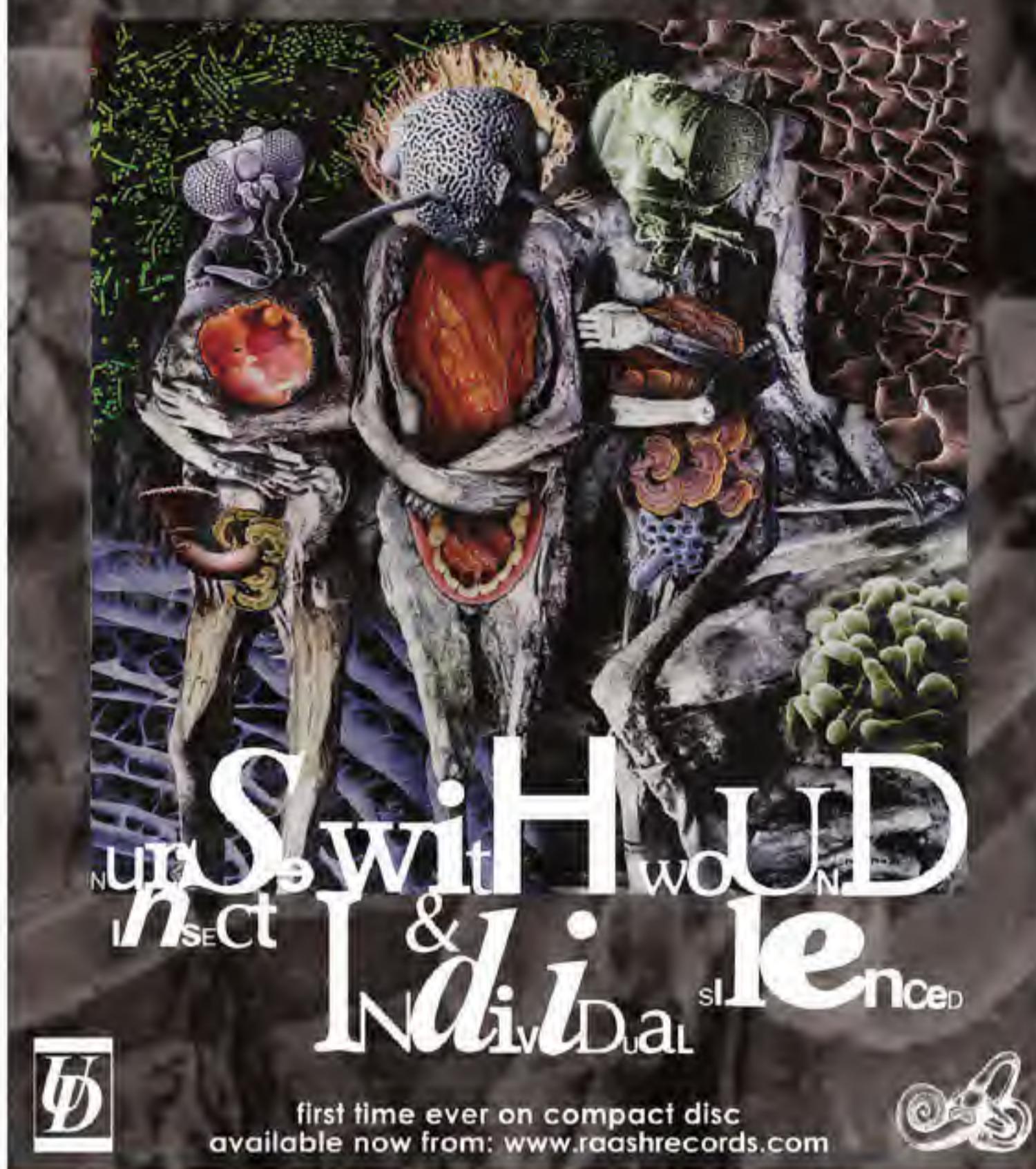
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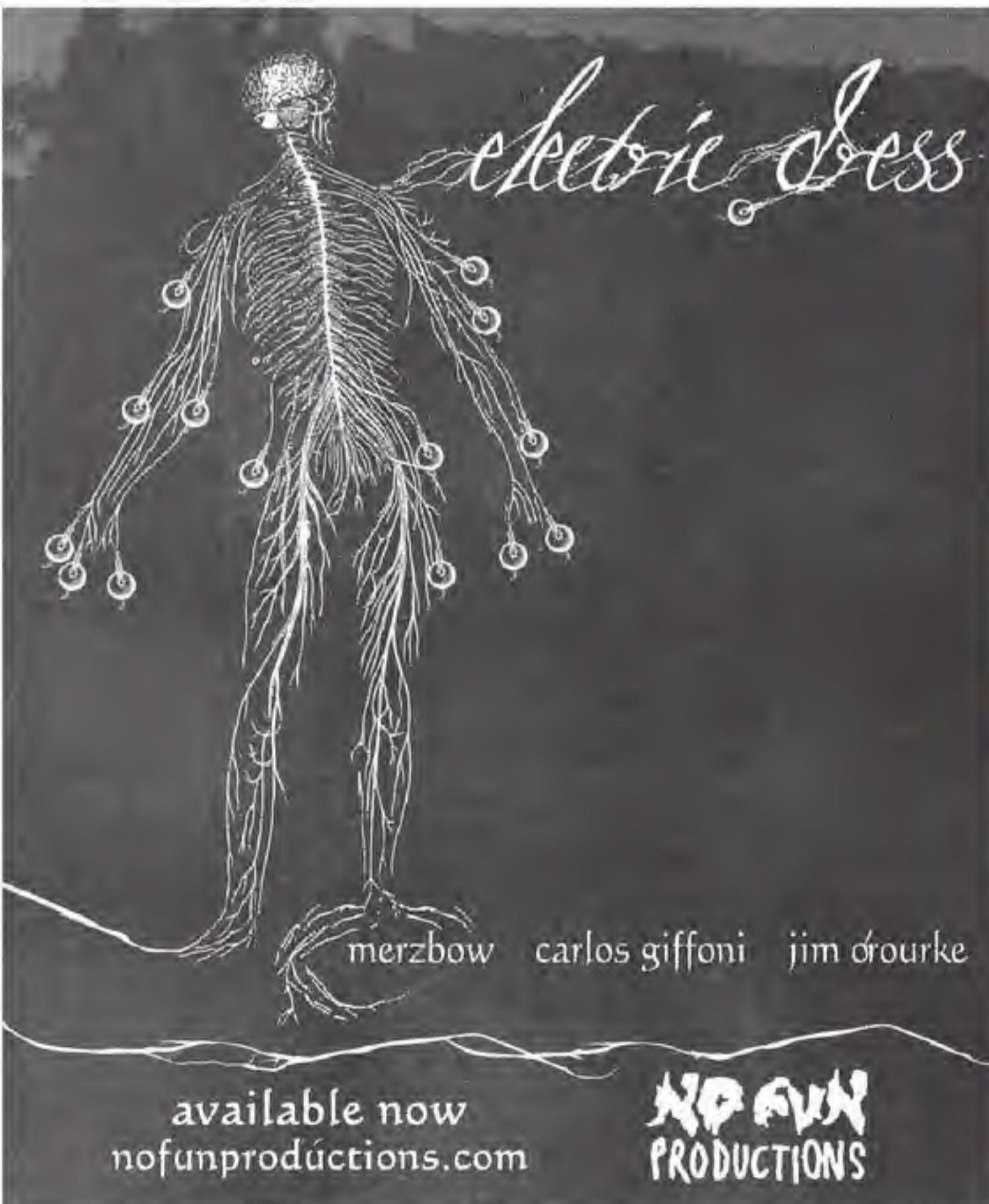
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Rhys Chatham was born in 1952 in Manhattan, where he studied classical flute and harpsichord tuning. He also took composition lessons with Morton Subotnick, in whose New York University Studio for Electronic Music he met Maryanne Amacher, Charlemagne Palestine, Serge Tcherepnin, Ingram Marshall and Eliane Radigue, sparking his interest in long duration minimalism. His *Two Gongs* premiered in 1971 at downtown New York's legendary venue the Kitchen, where he worked as Music Director between 1971–73, and later from 1977–80. After discovering punk at a Ramones gig in 1975, he began composing for massed electric guitars, bass and drums in works like *Guitar Trio* (1977), *Drastic Classicism* (1981), *Massacre On MacDougal Street* (1982) and *Die Dönnnergötter* (1985). His early groups drew on New York's post No Wave scene, with Glenn Branca and members of Ut, Band Of Susans and Sonic Youth passing through his ranks; the period is documented on 2002's triple CD collection *An Angel Moves Too Fast To See* (*Table Of The Elements*).

Since 1988 Chatham has lived in Paris, where his works have included symphonies, ballets and the piece *An Angel Moves Too Fast To See*, scored for 100 electric guitars. In the 1990s he took up the trumpet and became interested in Techno and trip hop, eventually teaming up with MIDI programmer Martin Wheeler for 1996's *Neon* (NTone) and "Althese", a track on the following year's *Macro Dub Infection Vol 2* (Virgin). In 1999, The Wire Editions label teamed him up with free improvising stereo guitarist Gary Smith, keyboardist Pat Thomas, bassist Gary Jeff and drummer Lou Ciccotelli on *Hard Edge*, a furious cocktail of free music and drum 'n' bass.

In 2005, *A Crimson Grail* for 400 electric guitars was performed at the Sacré Coeur in Montmartre. Current projects include a Metal-meets-minimalism quintet, Essentialist, with fellow guitarists David Daniell and Adam Wills, bassist Byron Westbrook and drummer Joe Stickney. The Jukebox took place at Chatham's delightfully cluttered apartment in Paris's Goutte d'Or district.

La Monte Young

"The Well-Tuned Piano"

FROM THE WELL-TUNED PIANO 81x25 6:17:50–
11:18:59 PM NYC (GRAMAVISION) 1974

It's in Just Intonation, first of all. Is it a harpsichord? Is it me?

I don't think we're allowed to play you your own music. And it's not a harpsichord.

Oh it's La Monte, *The Well-Tuned Piano*. I used to tune his piano. In the early 70s I wanted to book him for the Kitchen, and went over to his house. We hadn't met before, but I knew his work. I'd read *Selected Writings, An Anthology*, everything I could. At the time I was a harpsichord tuner – that's how I put myself through university – and when I heard his piano I said, 'Hmm, I heard something a little out of tune there, I think I could tune it better for you.' He laughed, because he knew I was angling for composition lessons. So the deal we made was I tuned his piano and he gave me a composition lesson.

What did he teach you?

His tuning systems. The system is the composition. Like, for example, a ratio of 63:64. How do you tune that? Let's say the fundamental is C, tuning 64 is easy, it's just eight times eight, an octave figure, another C. But how do you break down 63? Nine times seven. You play a C and tune a D to it, because the ninth overtone is easy to tune. Then you take that D and tune another C to its seventh overtone. It's not going to be equal tempered, it's going to be a flat C. Unlike the double manual harpsichord, you can't have two different Cs on a piano, so you tune the B up, and the difference between the B and the C, between the nine times seven and the eight times eight, will be an interval in the ratio 63:64. And when you have that, you just tune chords to the two

notes, until there are no beats. When you shift from the key of 64 to the key of 63, the difference is felt rather than heard. And it's so beautiful.

How did you end up tuning harpsichords at such an early age?

My father was a harpsichordist. I met everyone on the New York Early Music scene, and studied with an instrument builder called Hugh Gough. When I was 18 I found a loft in SoHo and I needed to make some money quick, so my parents suggested I study harpsichord tuning with Hugh. It turned out to be a really good way to make money. 20 minutes to tune a harpsichord, for \$15. And I had a lot of work. My girlfriend thought I was a drug dealer – she couldn't figure out how I was making so much money [laughs].

How did you get into minimalism?

At first I was really into post-serial music, the more dissonant the better. As a flute player, I got to play Boulez's *Sonatine* with [pianist] Paul Jacobs. I used to buy contemporary music records the way most kids buy rock records. I didn't want to hear anything about major triads. And then someone told me about the Monday night concerts at the Electric Circus, and the first one I went to was in May 68. John Cage playing chess with Marcel Duchamp [*Reunion*], and there was Gordon Mumma, David Behrman, David Tudor and Merce Cunningham. I was fascinated and started going regularly. One night Terry Riley was playing, and I'd seen a score of his in *An Anthology*, which looked really cool, and so I went and I saw this guy playing what sounded like a circus organ, really tonal. I tried to get my money back and leave but they wouldn't give it to me, so I went to listen to the rest of the concert. And what I heard really changed my life [laughs]. Then I was into music of long duration.

I studied with Morton Subotnick, and he let me use his studio on weekends and I made Buchla synthesizer pieces, with lots of feedback and noises. Maryanne Amacher and Serge Tcherepnin were there, and a friend of my father's whose name was Charlemagne Palestine, and they all really influenced me.

Charlemagne Palestine

"Tymbral For Pran Nath"

FROM IN MID-AIR (ALGA MARGHEN) 1970

Wow, it's really beautiful. I'm surprised I don't know it. Is this a friend of mine?

You just said he was a friend of your father's. This is Charlemagne? [Looks at CD cover] This is really early, I didn't know this was even out. Cool. I knew him about that time, but he never played me this. Before he went out to CalArts we were really close, he was like my big brother. I wanted to be just like him.

What, drinking cognac and collecting fluffy toys too?

Well music-wise, I mean. We both studied with Pandit Pran Nath.

Through the good offices of La Monte Young...

Yes, my 'composition lessons' with La Monte consisted of studying North Indian classical music. For a while I didn't have a place to live, and La Monte and Marian [Zazeela] let me stay at their place. It was wonderful living with them because we'd get up every morning at 5:30 and sing low tones for an hour.

What was your take on that whole Young/Tony Conrad 'who owns the music?' debate?

Oh, it's such a shame the rest of the music isn't out. Particularly La Monte's sopranino saxophone pieces. Tony's position was that they were group compositions but La Monte said he was the



Rhys Chatham in Paris, April 2007

composer. I see where they're both coming from and I'm not going to take sides. I love them both. I used to perform with Tony and Charlemagne in a trio in the early 70s.

Eliane Radigue

"Arthesis"

ON GEELRIANDRE-ARTHESES (FRINGES) 1973

[Listens intently for several minutes] Who could this be? Is it Eliane? [Looks at CD cover] Oh, this is the one she did out at the University of Iowa. I remember when she went out there. She was another one of my great influences. I met her at NYU. I must have been about 20. The music of hers I heard was her pre-ARP tape music, and I had never heard anything like it. She was living in a loft on the Bowery at 6th Street with two huge, beautiful Voice Of The Theater speakers and her Revox tape recorders. Eliane was one of the first people I programmed for the Kitchen.

How did you end up curating events there at the age of 19?

I played percussion for [choreographer] Daniel Nagrin's dance classes, and he would have three-hour improvisation sessions and invite different musicians each week. One week it was Woody and Steina Vasulka, and we got talking. They were very interested in electronic music so I took them to NYU to show them the Buchla. We started collaborating and then in 1970 they opened the Kitchen to present their video work and invited me to do music for it.

What was the original Kitchen like?

It was a very large high-ceilinged loft in what was the kitchen of the old Broadway Central Hotel, which got turned into a place called the Mercer Arts Center. There were five separate spaces, programmed by different people. You'd have Richard Foreman doing minimalist plays in one room and The New York Dolls playing in another. In fact I remember once Eliane was playing at the same time as The Dolls. The Kitchen served a real need, because those of us that were doing long duration music weren't welcome uptown. They were interested in post-serial music, Elliott Carter, Charles Wuorinen... Uptown music. People like Philip Glass would play in someone's loft and charge people at the door, but I thought it'd be nice if we had a more formal place to play. We had a sound system and a good grand piano. Woody and Steina and I worked for free, nobody made any money. The grants we got just covered the rent and the musicians played for the door. And we had a concert there every Monday night for two years. I invited all my friends from NYU: Eliane, Maryanne, Laurie Spiegel...

And you consciously chose not to programme uptown stuff.

Well, I made an exception for Otto Luening, because he was so sweet [laughs]. But uptown composers already had places to play, and we didn't. The Kitchen was where we could play. SoHo was incredible back then. All these artists, composers, sculptors, poets, musicians, choreographers, living within a 20 block radius of each other. Someone like Yvonne Rainer would do a dance performance at someone's loft and

next day you'd see Phil Glass and Richard Serra in the Puerto Rican breakfast place talking about it. Ideas really got shared in a way that you can't do with the Internet today. It was a wonderful period, but Woody, Steina and I eventually got burned out, because when you're producing so many events for free, you end up getting tired. So after two years we gave the spot to Robert Stearns, who started getting all kinds of grants and actually paying people correctly.

Aunt Sally

"Blitzkrieg Bop"

FROM LIVE 1978-1979 (P-VINE/BLUES INTERACTIONS) 1978

Yeah! Ramones! [Listens for a couple of seconds] But this is a girl band! Who is it?

Aunt Sally, a Japanese punk group from the end of the 70s featuring the singer Phew.

Wow! Like I said, Terry Riley was the first epiphany, but The Ramones was the second. CBGBs, 1975. I'd been making long duration music using one chord, they were using three [laughs].

How did you discover them?

I was back working at the Kitchen again, as a technician, when this group of composers arrived who'd studied with Robert Ashley at Mills College, including Jill Kroesen and Peter Gordon, who was one of the first conservatory-trained composers to incorporate rock elements into his compositions. He was very influential. I played flute in his Love Of Life Orchestra and one night he said, 'Rhys, have you ever been to CBGBs? Come on down, there's a group playing you might like.' And that was my first rock concert. The Ramones. Changed my life. I suddenly had this idea that if Phil [Glass] was using basically jazz instrumentation in his work and Steve [Reich] came out of Ghanaian drumming, I could use rock. My composer friend Scott Johnson lent me a Fender Telecaster and showed me how to play barre chords and simple blues scales. I had sore fingers for a month. The nice thing about guitar, though, unlike the trumpet, which I took up later, is that you can at least be playing in a band on some level pretty quickly.

Theoretical Girls

"US Millie"

FROM THEORETICAL GIRLS (ACUTE) 1978

Theoretical Girls [laughs]. That's Jeffrey Lohn, and Wharton [Tiers] on drums. I remember the studio where they recorded this. We were so proud of this, we made sure it got on the jukebox at Magoo's, which was a bar just below Canal Street where artists used to run up bar tabs and pay them off with pictures. In 1977 I was back programming at the Kitchen, and I became friends with Jeffrey and Glenn [Branca]. It was a great time, and we all played in each other's groups.

It's hard to find out who did what and when in Theoretical Girls because Glenn and Jeffrey don't want anything to do with each other.

Oh, they were always very volatile personalities. One time they actually got into a fistfight, and I had to split them up. I nearly got a black eye. And Glenn and I haven't spoken in over 20 years. You

know, it's hard when you're compared in the press all the time. But we're the best thing that happened to each other – people who like his music will like mine, and vice versa.

Leo Smith

"Love Is A Rare Beauty"

FROM AKHREANVENTION (KABELL) 1981

It's not Don Cherry. He didn't hit any high [trumpet] notes like that. Is this Leo Smith?

Well done.

[Listens attentively] Holy shit. You know, between guitarists there's always a lot of competition, but trumpet players feel nothing but sympathy for each other [laughs]. I didn't start playing trumpet until I was 30. And [trombonist] Jim Staley said, 'Rhys, taking up the trumpet at age 30 is like deciding to be an athlete at age 30.' And he was right. It was a fucking drag to learn how to play that thing. I developed tendinitis and had to learn how to play without pressing the instrument too hard against my lips. Since then it's been fine.

Which trumpeters did you admire?

Don Cherry. I saw a concert Garrett List produced at the Kitchen and I was so impressed. I really wanted to play trumpet. But there was another reason also. I'd seen a film in the early 80s called *Black And Blue*, which was a documentary about Black Sabbath and Blue Öyster Cult. I'd already done *Guitar Trio* and started incorporating Heavy Metal into the work I was doing, and I really wanted to play like Tony Iommi, but I just couldn't get my fingers moving fast enough. Essentially I'm a wind player, and guitar has so many frets, I couldn't figure out where to put my fingers. That's why I tend to play chords. But with trumpet there are only three valves, and you have to think the note for it to come out. It's not like on a piano when if you hit a C you get a C. With trumpet you have the same fingering position for an infinite number of notes. The highest note on trumpet has never been played. I took to it like a duck to water. I wanted to play fast. But I didn't realise how long it'd take to learn. It wasn't until about 93 that I could really do it.

How did you get into electronica? Were you already familiar with late 80s House and Garage?

[Film maker] Vivienne Dick played me some Detroit House music and I thought it was tacky, but she said, 'Why don't you listen to it? You might like it.' And she was right – I did. Later when I heard Atari Teenage Riot and Aphex Twin I was in heaven. MIDI was happening, and I'd kept all my effects pedals, so I started playing long trumpet solos over electronica beats. I hooked up with [British producer] Martin Wheeler and we put out *Neon*, which was a success.

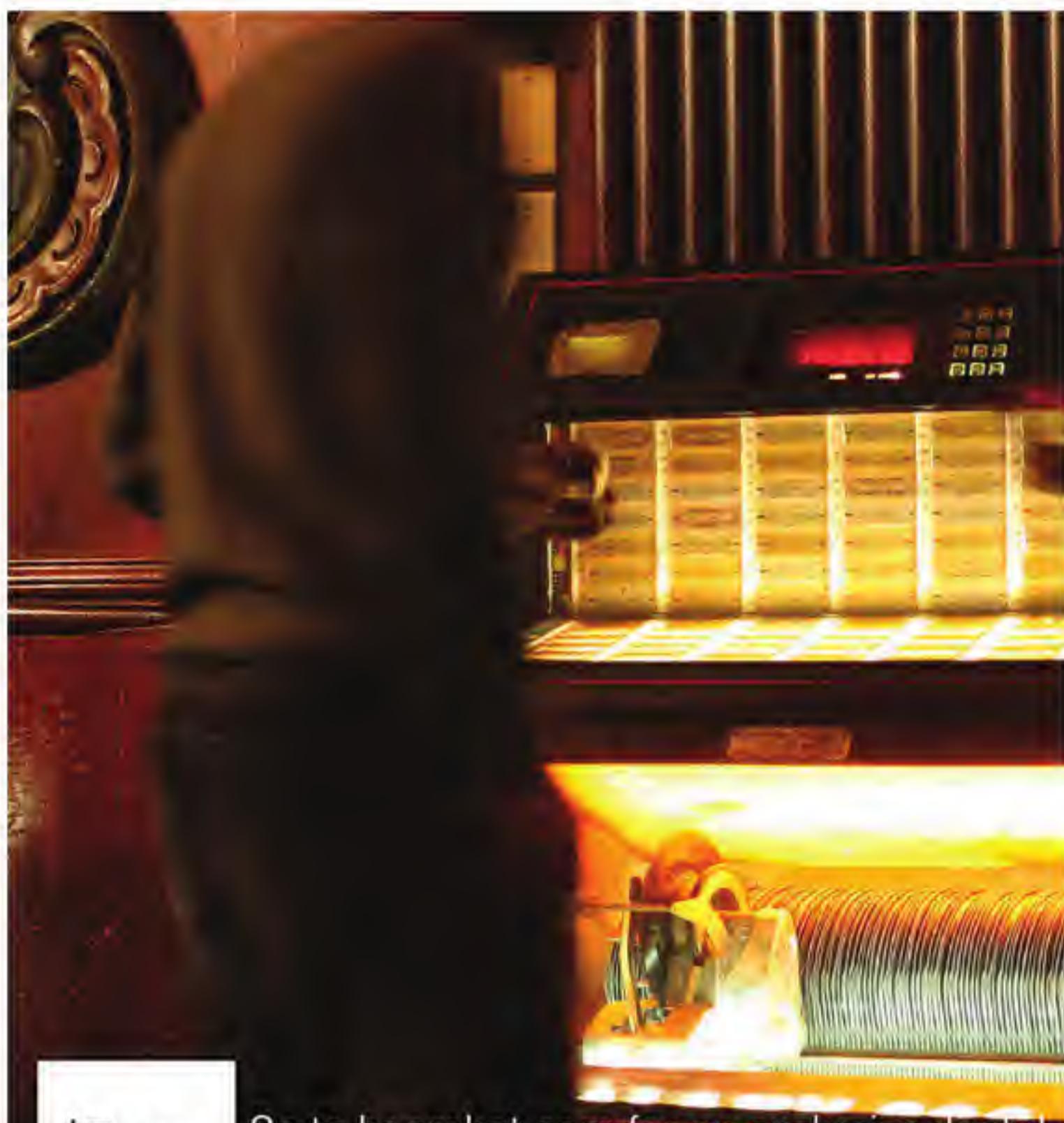
Spring Heel Jack

"Salt"

FROM MASSES (THIRSTY EAR) 2001

Wow... [Listens to Evan Parker's solo] Damn, I recognise that saxophonist. It's not his album is it? No, he's a guest star, as it were.

I don't know at all, but I like it a lot [looks at CD cover].

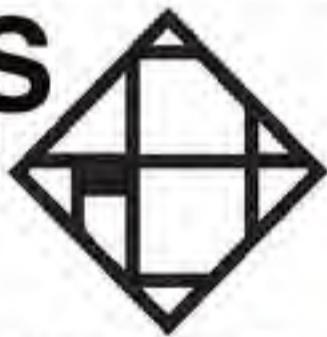


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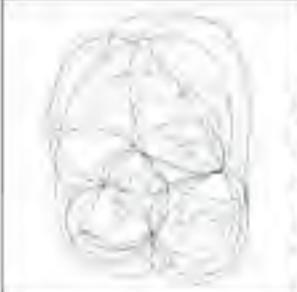
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This CD/DVD features a beautiful live performance at a sold out Teatro Colosseo in Torino Italy featuring David Tibet (Current 93), Julia Kent, Johann Johannsson & Baby Dee. Using visual, linguistic and musical language, the expanded Larsen line-up pays tribute to the work of Czech avant garde designer, typographer, founder of Devestil and cultural radicalist Karel Teige and his Abeceda.



JESSICA RYLAN *INTERIOR DESIGNS*

Jessica Rylan (you may know her better as Carrt) is finally releasing her first officially published instrumental work for synthesizer. Titled *Interior Designs*, these compositions are more "classic" in nature than her work as Carrt. Inspired by Pauline Oliveros, Eliane Radigue, Iannis Xenakis and especially Thomas Lehn.



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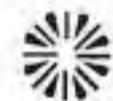


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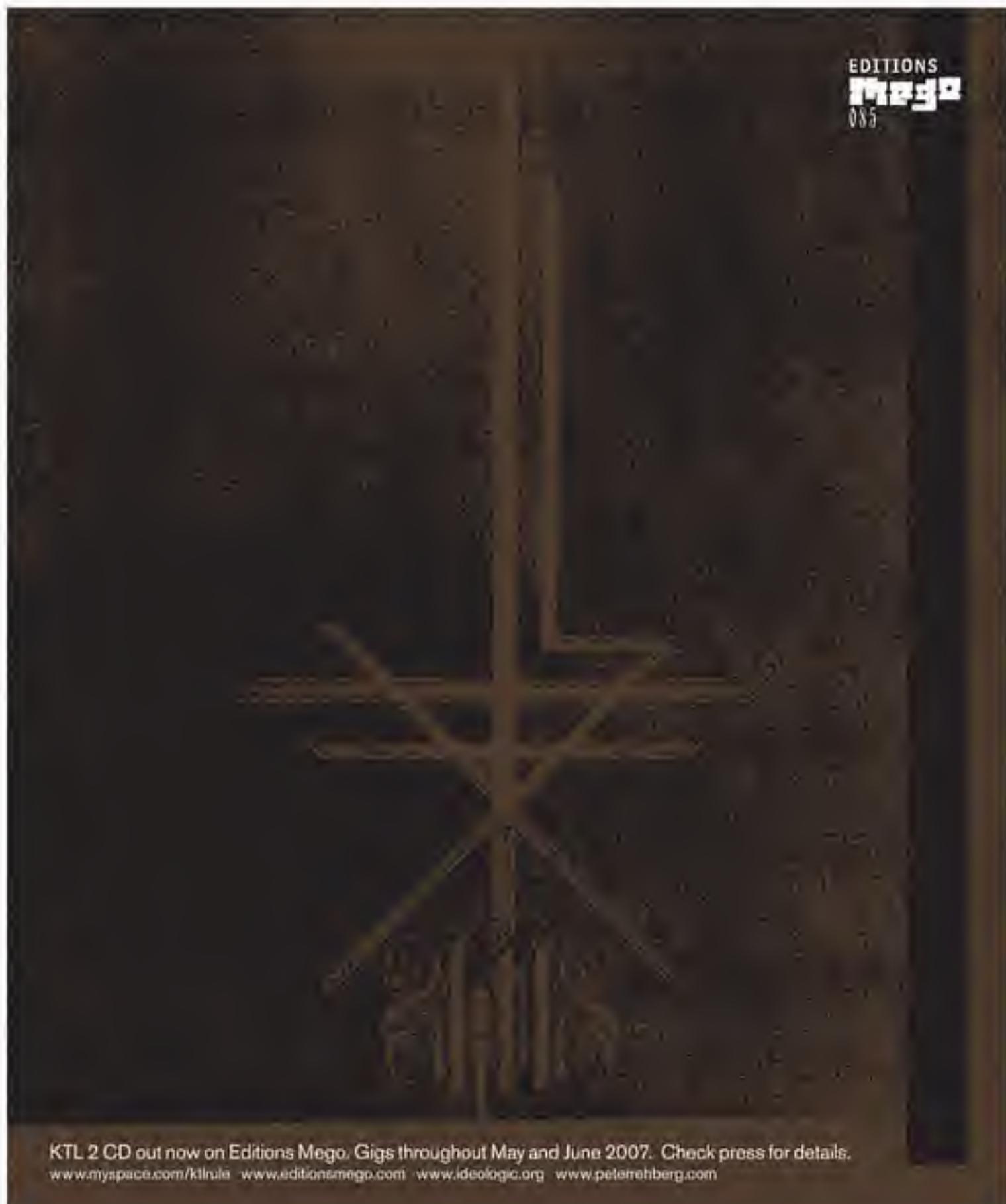
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Spring Heel Jack started out as a drum 'n' bass outfit in 1995, hit a kind of creative roadblock after four albums and came out of it with this amazing fusion of beats and free Improv.

Oh, [double bassist] William Parker's on this. He used to live down the street from me. And that was Evan Parker, of course.

How did your own interest in improvisation come about?

Back in 1973 I had a girlfriend who took me to Studio Rivbea one night and I saw Steve Lacy. That was another one of those epiphanies – it was like Stockhausen's *Zeitmasse*, but improvised. So precise, so well executed. Then I went back another time and heard [saxophonist] Sam Rivers, and he just played on and on and on and I had no idea what he was doing, and I said, 'I gotta get into this'. So I stopped playing flute and got a tenor saxophone and took lessons from Keshavan Maslak. He didn't insist that I learn scales. He said everybody's playing free now. But when I started on trumpet my entire training was jazz based. I practised like a motherfucker for ten years. When *The Wire* asked me to do *Hard Edge* with Gary Smith, I was still hesitant. I wasn't sure I wanted to play free music, because I'd never done it before, but [producer] Trevor Manwaring insisted. He wanted it to be more on Gary's side of things, so we got together and it worked out fine. It was an atypical album for me, but one I like very much.

Peter Zummo
"Song IV"

FROM *ZUMMO WITH AN X (NEW WORLD)* 1985

That's not Garrett List on trombone. It's not Jim Staley. It's not George Lewis. Who's on cello? I didn't know any cello players in New York. Except Arthur Russell.

You got it.

That's Arthur? Who's on trombone?

Peter Zummo.

That's Peter? Wow, I must get this [looks at cover]. We were in [Peter Gordon's] Love Of Life Orchestra together. Peter's a very fine player, really underrated. You know, Arthur and I were roommates for about a year back in 75 or so, in an incredible building on 12th Street between 1st and A. Allen Ginsberg lived there, so did Richard Hell. One day I saw these weird guys in the hallway all dressed in black suits and it turned out to be Television. They lived there too.

Did you hear Russell's later forays into dance music?
I remember him coming into the Kitchen one day in the late 70s and telling me about it, but I was more into punk. I never had time to check out the dance scene because there was so much else going on.

Earth
"Seven Angels"

FROM *EARTH 2 (SUB POP)* 1992

Aaaargh, yeeeah! So it's Om, or Sleep. It's one of those groups. It's great. Who is it?

Earth.

Funnily enough one of the groups I'm least familiar with. I've got albums by Om, Sleep, Sunn O))) –

which isn't pronounced 'sunno' by the way, but, like, 'sun'... A whole play on words, because the sun appears to revolve around the Earth. These guys are real pioneers. Minimalism meets Heavy Metal. In a way I predate these guys, but it's funny because they've influenced me. When I first got into HM I wanted to play fast like Tony Iommi. I never thought of taking Sabbath riffs and *slowing them down* the way these guys have done. I was on tour with Table Of The Elements last year and [guitarist] David Daniell put something like this on in the van, and I just loved it. I said, I'm going to form a Heavy Metal band to play just like this. And [Table Of The Elements'] Jeff Hunt said, 'If you do that, I'll put the album out and book you a tour.' That's how Essentialist started. But I decided I wouldn't listen to these guys anymore, because if I did they'd influence what I do. I had to find my own voice. So we went on tour and developed the material, and recorded an album's worth of music. It sounds more like Slayer with a touch of Venom meets minimalism. The pieces are composed collectively. I suggest the form and each guitarist brings their licks along, and we work the way a band normally works. The album will be coming out on Table Of The Elements in October.

What brought you to Paris?

My then wife was a French choreographer. We'd married and lived in New York for eight years, but by 1988 she wanted to come back to France. There was a whole amazing scene happening and she wanted to be part of it. So we came. And soon afterwards the Aéronet in Lille commissioned my first piece for 100 electric guitars, *An Angel Moves Too Fast To See*.

That never could have happened in America. There wasn't the funding for it. But we've now played it in 22 different cities all over the world, except in the US. We were going to do it at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in 1990 but the guy said, 'I know how loud Rhys is with six electric guitars... Multiply that by 15 – there's *no way* we're doing that here.' [Laughs] Of course, there are thunderous moments where everybody plays in unison, but there's nothing like the sound of 100 electric guitars playing *quietly*. One of my future projects is to invite six different composers to write six sections for an evening-length piece for 100 guitars. I'm going to ask Glenn [Branca], Thurston Moore, Stephen O'Malley and the guys from Om too – though they don't know about it yet. **On A Crimson Grail you go even further – that calls for 400 electric guitars.**

We did that at the Sacré Coeur here in Montmartre. I was in negotiation with the bishop for weeks and weeks. People have to be able to pray there 24/7, and he was concerned they wouldn't be able to do that if there were 400 electric guitars in there. I said, 'Don't worry, it's meditative, I'm gonna make music to pray to.' The deal we finally cut was I played for half an hour and then people could pray for half an hour. We played *An Angel* outdoors first of all, because there was a mass going on, and at midnight we got to set up inside. There were 10,000 people there.

What did the bishop think of it?

He got this beatific look on his face, shook my hand and said, 'Now I'll see how much praying I can do.' □ *A Crimson Grail* is out now on Table Of The Elements



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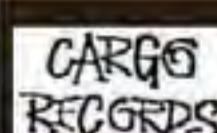
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Formed from the chaotic marriage of The Fall's Mark E Smith and Germany's Mouse On Mars, Von Südenfed is avant music's most dysfunctional family, but their first album is a compelling mixture of smart and tatty. David Stubbs meets the threesome to hear about the creative argy-bargy that led to *Tromatic Reflexxions*, bringing funk to the academy and opening the trapdoors of chance.

Photography: Leon Chew

Mark E Smith is in jovial, cackling mood, beginning to relax after completing an 18 date tour with The Fall, whose demise seems somehow less likely now than at any point in their 31 year history. That said, Von Südenfed, the Anglo-German alliance he's forged with Jan St Werner and Andi Toma of Mouse On Mars is one of the most significant working partnerships in which he's been involved since The Fall's inception in 1976. It's a genuine melding of musical minds, hence the decision to create a separate name for the project. Chromium-sleek, yet with a bruising, rock 'n' roll earthiness and coated with funk sweat, Von Südenfed's debut album *Tromatic Reflexxions* has excited comparisons in some quarters with LCD Soundsystem. Yet the very mention of their name causes Smith's joviality to evaporate. LCD's single "Losing My Edge", some felt, paid Smith affectionate homage. James Murphy's delivery is a deadpan take on Smith's singular vocal style, sheer, scabrous Lancastrian vitriol, with a strange touch of the WC Fields in the way he lets the last word of every phrase dangle. If it's not exactly a statue erected in his honour, it has been heralded as the apotheosis of post-punk revivalist rehabilitation. Smith, however, is having none of it.

"What a rip-off that is!" he spits. "I'm very insulted. I went into my local shop a few weeks ago, where I go for groceries. There's an Irish bloke in there, very nice, and he was playing this ["Losing My

Edge"]. I said, 'This sounds exactly like me, are you trying to take the piss?' At which point, the bloke's getting a bit paranoid, because obviously he's no idea who I am. He says, 'It's just a record I like, that's all.' I mean, this bloke [James Murphy], I've met him, he doesn't even talk like that, he's New York, New Jersey, or whatever. Just some New York arsehole. And it's the same rhythm as I was using with Mouse On Mars, the same one we laid down..."

There was a moment, several years ago, when The Fall appeared to be on the point of disintegration, held precariously in place by rickety props Smith himself seemed wantonly and drunkenly bent on kicking away. The saga of the onstage fights and New York arrest which very nearly put paid to his long, unwavering stand has been told many times. Instead of finishing him, however, it has become a part of his legend. That Smith has survived all of this, his bullhorn vocals still blaring, has lent him an iconic, as well as aesthetic air of indestructibility. There is no reason now not to believe that, health permitting, he won't still be around for decades yet.

Smith's iconic status has been ratcheted up by such bizarre events as his 2004 appearance on BBC television's *Newshight* in the wake of John Peel's death, in which his somewhat disconnected body language and refusal to join in the effusive gush of tributes to his DJ champion further bolstered his cult



Shotgun wedding

Mouse on Mars's Andi Toma and Jan St Werner
with Mark E Smith in Brighton, March 2007



status. Then there was his still stranger, one-off reading of the football results, again on the BBC. But beware – pat Smith on the head and he will bite. He will not easily be drawn into the vortex of postmodern hipdom, celebrated for his own sake as a preserved specimen of antique punk belligerence. Nor should he be. Smith remains a vital going concern and a working artist of a deceptively clear vision, who remains, in Peel's famous phrase, "always different, always the same". And always active.

Enter stage right Mouse On Mars. After emerging on the great, silvery tide of early 90s Ambient/Techno, they gradually distinguished themselves as specialists in metamorphosis, integrating a variety of genres and approaches into their sound while rebelling against their Techno origins and extolling the values of live instrumentation. Even so, for many, there is about them the confectionery whiff of pop and kitsch which makes their merger with Smith as Von Südenfed appear all the more unlikely. Indeed, the resulting album, *Tromatic Reflexxions*, is likely to provoke the same initial reaction as Leftfield's collaboration with John Lydon – smooth meets rough, smart meets tatty, sweet meets sour. Von Südenfed, however, are far more complex than that. Mouse On Mars's Toma and St Werner and The Fall leader get in among each other, strangely and stunningly revealing each other's strengths of adaptability and bloodymindness.

Regarding "Wipe That Sound"/"Cut The Gain", the 2004 Sonig 12" on which he and Mouse On Mars first collaborated, Smith vaguely recollects "hanging round Düsseldorf at the time", and that his wife was more familiar with Mouse On Mars than he was. However, he recalls the first mix having been made "mostly in Salford" in Lancashire, from where Smith hails. "It was just a straight vocal overdub over a mix they gave me." Certainly, on this single, you sense both sets of artists working in parallel with one another, tracking each other's movements without making physical contact. But it was a start.

I meet MOM's Toma and St Werner (their touring drummer, Dodo Nkishi, is not involved in this collaboration) at their high ceilinged studio and loft apartment in Düsseldorf, which until recently they shared with a Greek artist. Over cappuccino and cakes, St Werner recalls the genesis of Von Südenfed. "It started in London when Mark came into a gig," he remembers. "I think he was aware of our music but not so sure how interested he was in it. But then, the concert he saw, something worked well for him – it was a very noisy, very heavy gig, which sometimes people find hard to relate to. But still there was a rhythm, a concreteness to it. For him it worked well, so we connected and we asked him to work on the 12" on Sonig, just as a limited edition. And then Mark said, 'Well, that can't be the end of it.' He suggested we carry it on, try something else. It so happens that Mark has a friend in Düsseldorf whom he occasionally comes to visit. He came to the studio and we had a gig the next day, so we decided to do a session and see how it worked out. And it worked. That was quite a long session, from which we took bits to make the first sketches for tracks. Mark wanted to have that on tape and work on the lyrics. The next day, he came back and so we went on. It was quite casual. It was not really clear which plan or sketch we would have for this project, or what it would become."

Initially, suggests Smith, the working relationship took a while to gel properly. He was also a little wary of what he saw as Toma and St Werner's "sex symbol" status. "It was like a German lyric factory!" he grumbles, amusedly, of the early stages, in which roles were demarcated. "So I said to them, 'You have to get organised. It shouldn't all be laid onto me.' I said, 'We're part of a three man group.' The next thing was, they couldn't get a deal, so that delayed things. But then Domino picked it up."

If Toma and St Werner knew of The Fall, they weren't so cognizant, fortunately, of his formidable reputation – Mr Prole Art Threat, Fiery Jack, The North Will Rise Again and so forth. "We were aware of The Fall but not really Fall fans in that sense," confirms Toma, while St Werner adds, "I certainly appreciated them but I was aware that beyond that there are real Fall obsessives who know everything about them. I think it's as well that we were not super-fans because we would have been trembling in his presence and not been able to make a record."

The notion of collaborating with a Techno-oriented group was hardly new to Smith – as long ago as 1990, he was working with Tackhead on a track that became "Repetition", although his contribution sounds, in the very best sense of the phrase, telephoned in – spectral and disembodied. Prior to that he worked with Coldcut and later with distressed beats unit DOSE and Inch (featuring DOSE's Simon Spencer and Keir Stewart), in the mid-to late 90s, on 1996's "Plug Myself In" and 1999's "Inch" respectively. With the latter's Fall-type riff, you can hear Smith bringing himself to bear on Keir and Spencer – one of the mixes includes an audio clip of Smith aggressively and profanely laying down his ideas of how the track should sound, with a series of human beatbox-like "doosh" sounds – before the track segues into the realisation of that oral sketch. He had previously signed Dave Bush to his group, credited with "machines", to introduce a more Technoid element into The Fall's sound. By now, Smith was proclaiming himself bored of guitars, while reminiscing about clubbing expeditions and boasting of the German and Italian dance records in his collection. More recently, he appeared on a track on ex-Sugarcube Einar Örn's Ghostigital project.

All the same, for Smith the Von Südenfed experience was a novel one, having to hang back from his accustomed, imperious studio presence. "It went from me being a guest vocalist to a collaboration," he says. "Thing is, they didn't know me at all. And I'm used to calling the shots. I was taken by surprise by the way I work, I suppose. I'm used to being the boss, standing over the engineer, and in this situation I really had to hold back. You have to, really, otherwise you might end up getting sent back home on the next plane. Lufthansa! The thing I really had to change, though, was their original titles." Here, Smith refers to Mouse On Mars's predilection for slightly mutated, multi-syllabic creations, à la Autechre, of which he took a dim view. "You should have seen them," he groans.

To those with a passing acquaintance with Mouse On Mars, or who have only a glimmer of one aspect of their diverse oeuvre, they might well seem diametrically opposed to Smith. From playful outings like *laora Tahiti* to more recent submarine voyages into electronic experimentalism, they might seem

sprightly, restless, skipping from genre to genre like pebbles skimming at random tangents across the water. If Mouse On Mars are changelings, with all the virtues that implies, then Smith is more of a 'sameling', an undersung quality that has the value of predictability, of returning again and again to labour the same essential point with invincible defiance.

Of course, that's to do full justice neither to the bludgeoning but subtle tool that is Smith's voice, nor to Mouse On Mars's embrace of live, rock instrumentation. The great thing here isn't just the intriguing synthesis of polar opposites that was the aforementioned Leftfield-John Lydon one-off. What's immediately evident, listening to *Tromatic Reflexxions*, is the way MOM and MES merge into each other, revealing how much they actually have in common and how much they were prepared to absorb from each other. The electric keyboard stabs and compact, sawn-off riffs of the opening "Fledermaus Can't Get It" are Fall-like in their temple-throbbing insistence, while the familiarly disconcerting dry, scathing thrust of Smith's vocals submit to a brief moment of studio treatment, as he gags on a 'g'.

"It wouldn't work if we just swapped ideas over the Internet," avers St Werner, "because he was very influential on the way we work. There was a sort of 'vice versa' method of production. We'd maybe want to elaborate on something and he'd say, 'No, leave it like that, leave it that raw, don't fiddle around with it, it's all there.' But sometimes he had to get used to the things that we did, the way we edited and cut his voice. It's very chopped up, stop and go. He didn't like it at first but now he does. He came around to getting our way of looking at this stuff."

The same, cut-up treatment is meted out on "The Young, The Faceless And The Codes" but wisely it's minimised, just the occasional, token acknowledgement of what is theoretically possible. "Mark's voice is one which is already processed," says St Werner. "So for both of us it was new, but we both had the confidence that we both wanted the same thing, not just to fulfil some mental preset that we were dragging together on the same rope to find out what we knew we wanted. Mark has very definite ideas about the sounds he wants. It comes from listening to things. He imagines sounds and knows what he wants. In that sense, he's as much a producer as we are."

If anything, however, you suspect it's the more impervious Smith who has got about Mouse On Mars like knotweed. On "Flooded", he's the one who brags of "flooding the disco", drenching the electrical circuits. It's a metaphor for *Tromatic Reflexxions* as a whole, with Smith's creative disruptions staining, bending, distressing and enriching Mouse On Mars's sturdy mesh of loops and beats. They tweak with him but he knocks them into red-raw Fall shapes on the likes of "Duckrog", which sounds like the clutter and rattle of the contents of a kitchen utility cupboard, or the cheap, gnarly acoustic piano stomp of "The Rhinohead". Or, there is the 'field recording' interlude, in which Smith appears to be having an argument, summoning all his famous Mancunian truculence, with someone operating what sounds like heavy machinery, while they're trying to record. This, says Smith, was actually a fictional scenario, with Toma playing the part of a Polish worker.

"I think people who play instruments, virtuosos, trick themselves into thinking that their technique is

a substitute for the real rush you really want from music. Then again, Mark is a sort of virtuoso himself," says St Werner in tribute to Smith. "He is incredibly precise and quick in the way he realises his ideas. He's not like, 'Ah, oh dear, I don't know, can I have some tea, can I do that again later?' Either he does it – zwoop! – and it's down. Or he says, 'No, I can't relate to it.'

"We're much more into sound," he continues, "although we like what he does lyrically – there is so much in his voice that is amazing. To have an a cappella version of the album would be great for us, because there is so much in his voice – the dynamics, the tension between the repetition, the loops, the beats lends a distance, an abstract view on the music – the way he channels his voice into tracks, the way he 'places' them with an eagle eye."

If there is a virtue in Smith's smithness, the way he applies himself with such acuity to the anvil, Von Südenfed is a tribute also to St Werner and Toma's powers of absorption and compulsion to shapeshift.

"There are a lot of people who know what they do in music," says St Werner. "It's a sort of super-selfconsciousness. And we're not like that. Every track has to feel like we're doing something we've never done before." This means that their relationship with electronic music is an ambivalent one. Says Toma, "We started off disliking uniform Techno bands – we didn't want to be [part of that]. It was more practical to work live, it was more comfortable for us. What's good is that with technology you can drive it to its edge, get rid of all the presets, ask, 'Is there more it can do?' You can drive machines like that in a way that you really can't with human beings – it's not very nice!"

Mouse On Mars's artistic success has been in fighting against the tides that bore them to success in the first place. "We were drawn into this movement. At the time of our first record, it was easy to equate what we were doing with this other Ambient/Techno scene," says St Werner. "The thing was, we didn't care. Whether playing to 20,000 people at a rave in Japan or a rock festival, or the event we're playing tonight in Germany, that's fine. We are us, regardless of the context. I dislike the word but don't have a better one, but it's 'idiosyncratic' – something that comes out of itself, with the urge to follow an idea which can only be explained or fulfilled by that particular unit of being. Of course, as you move along, you bounce off this genre here or that trend there, or some technological innovation. You're part of history, which you can't escape. But those things don't matter – what your work is about is to comprehend what you are after yourself. The reason some people don't make great art is that they look around too much, look for gaps or a place where they feel they can belong. That's dysfunctional. It's not the way to set your controls – with clichés and presets. In art, the attitude should be all about your own work. Once you've got a product, forget about it, either sell it or put it in the bin."

This comment recalls the late Derek Bailey's comment that no one should play one of his CDs more than once, and helps you realise that Mouse On Mars, for all their chromium popish surfaces, are closer to the avant garde, one of whose undersung virtues is that it is actually far

more ephemeral and disposable than even the worst of pop, whose pillars of naughtiness can endure for decades, long remembered, albeit with a grimace. "Yes," nods St Werner, "the way we work, we go back, over and over when we're making records, to find things, hear mistakes, but that's not to say we're looking to make work that has some infinite value, it's not like that."

Mind you, when asked how he feels hearing old Mouse On Mars records, Toma coolly replies, "I must say that most of the time I'm pretty happy."

St Werner's highly personalised sense of musical theory resulted in his 2005 appointment as Artistic Director at STEIM in Amsterdam, the "centre for research and development of instruments and tools for performers in the electronic performance arts". "The idea of STEIM is to have intuitive interfaces, that is to say, whatever is best suited to the artist's specific purpose, and get that to the artist," explains St Werner. "It's partly academic and of course there is quite a bit of programming and engineers involved – but I think they asked me to get involved because they want someone who has an 'immediate' idea of music."

"One new thing they are developing is this little board which can read data. So you can attach to it a controller, something you twist, a slider, or scratching, or ultrasound. This device reads the data in a very precise resolution and sends it to software, which translates this data to MIDI – and then, whatever software you use, you can take this as a source and play with it. It frees you up."

That said, in the course of his work in Amsterdam, St Werner finds himself coming up hard against the surprisingly ramrod values of the experimental music academia. "The academic world has a horror of the beat, the steady rhythm," he sighs. "In music academia, the beat is the lowest form of art, enslaving you to an automatic process. You surrender to the animal, mechanistic instinct of your body and this is unacceptable to the intellectual. But I must say, I like that there are people thinking like this, that there are unbridgeable differences, that you have resistance from that school of listening, which says, 'No beat. Convince us why we should have a beat. Why do you need that grid underneath? What is it good for?' It's good to challenge that. And, although our music is totally beat-driven, it's actually something we ourselves oppose, within the music. You break it, you twist it and you find a different version and you always try to escape it as much as you use it. It's there to build a tension. That's what funk is about – the break, the holding back, the letting go."

Indeed, that's very sexual. "Yes," agrees St Werner, "it's a very bodily thing, and academics and sex is a very sad story. It's very hard to explain to intellectuals about the need to incorporate the body."

On Von Südenfed's "Speech Contamination/German Fear Of Österreich", Smith stabs out a hard to decipher, syllable-by-syllable German intonation, the origins of which might confirm St Werner's suggestion that The Fall singer has "some kind of ambiguous obsession" with Germany. Smith scoffs at the notion, repeating the phrase over and over with satirical relish. "Ambiguous obsession! 'Mark, you have an ambiguous obsession with

Germany!' See, I don't think that's true, really. A lot of people say that, but I don't see it. A lot of Northern people, when they go on holiday, they end up in Germany or Amsterdam, but I don't think it's anything beyond that. I do have friends in Düsseldorf, yes, they're British, used to work in the Army Signals Corps."

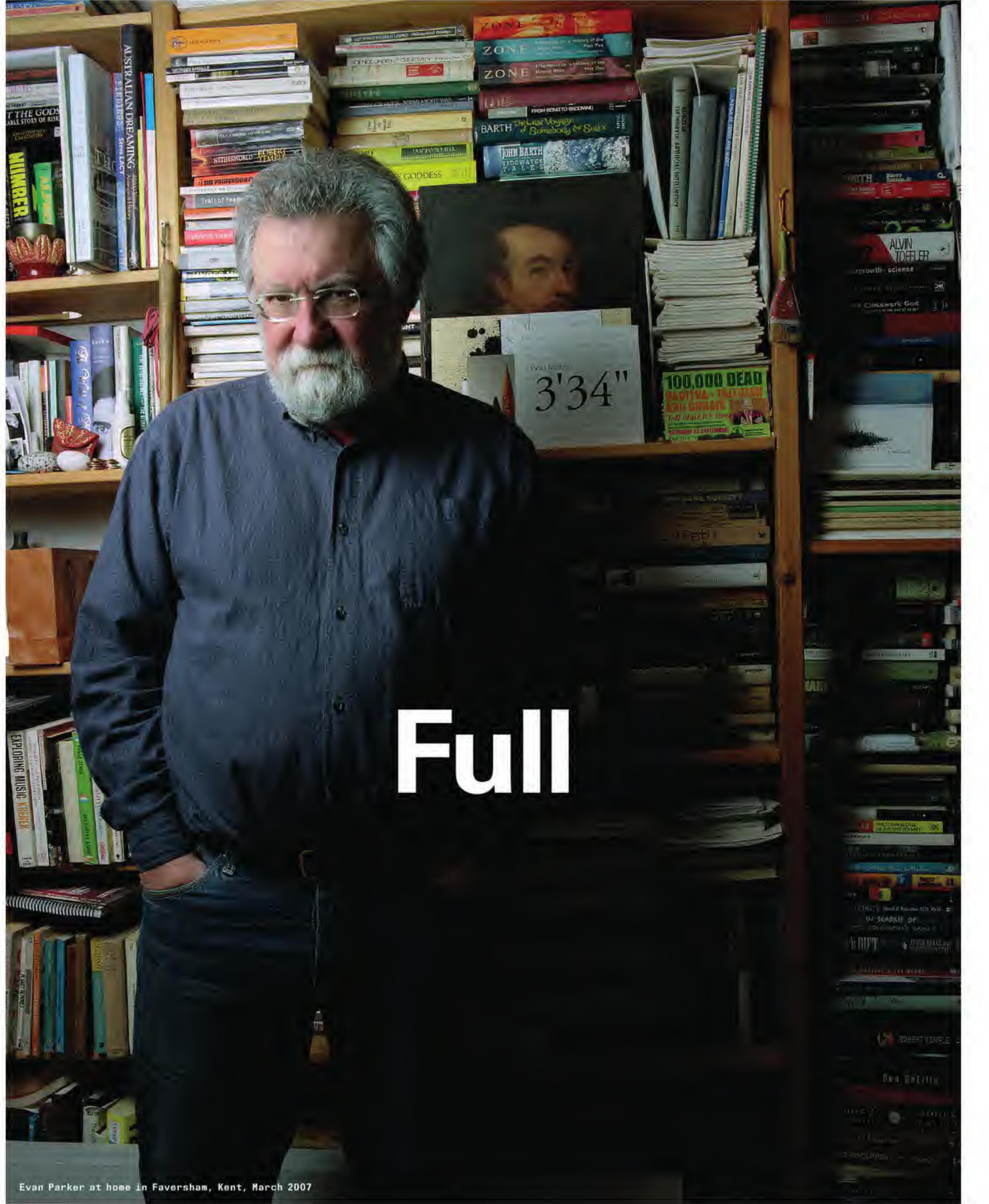
That said, Smith has a strong musical connection with the great Krautrock tradition, that primitive, looping, attritional drive which he also finds in his beloved rockabilly. "People like Charlie Feathers, they didn't need 48 track studios," he says. He still feels now that Von Südenfed should have issued the original raw live/studio recording from which the final tracks were wrought. This was an idea that tempted St Werner and Toma as well, but they eventually decided against it. "You can't just hope to press a live session onto record and hope that it will recreate the excitement you felt as you played," asserts St Werner. "So we went into production – and that was a little bit tricky because our way of producing is profoundly different from how Mark works."

"I was looking for that Can/Faust feel," says Smith. "I was trying to get them into that groove, you know, get them to realise their heritage." However, neither member of Mouse On Mars regards themselves as part of the Stockhausen/Can/Kraftwerk/DAF/Neubauten continuum. Post-war reconstruction is long since complete – theirs is a new sound environment in which the metaphors for the state of the nation undergirding the work of their German predecessors are obsolete. "In reality, we were listening much more to Anglo-American stuff. But then much of the 'Anglo-American' stuff we heard was probably very influenced by the groups you mention."

"Ultimately, we play ourselves," says St Werner of Mouse On Mars. Smith, it could be said, 'plays' other people. In Düsseldorf, St Werner and Toma show me a brief excerpt of filmed studio footage. Smith is prowling around, as is his wont onstage. To the casual observer he might look shambling and incompetent as he leans over and prods intermittently at buttons. He might look like some confused old dad wandering into his son's bedroom and meddling curiously with hi-tech equipment he doesn't comprehend, to disastrous effect. But he knows what he's doing – switching the colours, cunningly opening the trapdoors of chance and opportunity. "That's just me, David," he confides. "I see a button and I trigger it off. 'Live dubbing'? Yeah, that's it."

"There is something in the human brain that can't do certain things in parallel," states St Werner. "Like 'experiencing' and 'judging', it's impossible to do both at once. We get an incredible number of demos sent to Sonig [MOM's label] and Frank [Dommert, in MOM's office] has to sift through them all, plus the ones we get handed on tour and I try to help out and listen to some too. So often my response is, 'Wow, if you could just *hear* what you did there and not just *feel* it.' You can sense that they were too caught up in producing it. I think it would be ideal if they didn't touch any of their instruments and 'listened' to what it should be, or visualise, or even smell it. Mark is very able to do that," he concludes. "He somehow sees what he wants and that's it, that's the secret." □ *Tromatic Reflexxions* is released this month on Domino





Full

Evan Parker at home in Faversham, Kent, March 2007

On the eve of his Free Noise tour with Yellow Swans, Burning Star Core and more, saxophonist Evan Parker is still seeking out new applications for his formidable circular breathing techniques. Now in his sixties, the veteran of 1960s music liberation struggles talks about his ongoing work with his Electro-Acoustic Ensemble, Spring Heel Jack, Alex von Schlippenbach and others, plus his relationship with former Incus partner Derek Bailey. Words: Philip Clark. Photography: Ivan Jones

circle

Evan Parker is thinking back to the first time he left England when, as a 14 year old, his father took him to the 1958 World's Fair in Brussels. "I know you'll immediately be thinking Xenakis and the Philips Pavilion," he teases, referring to Greek composer Iannis Xenakis's electronic composition *Concret PH*, premiered in the pavilion alongside Edgard Varèse's *Poème Électronique*. "But what you probably won't know is that Sidney Bechet also played at the same Expo. In that same short visit I heard Bechet and I heard Xenakis. You could say I've spent the rest of my life trying to make sense of those two experiences."

Parker is enjoying discussing these rarely disclosed slices of his prehistory, and drawing a trajectory between Bechet's aroused soprano saxophone and Xenakis's feral electronica opens up his memory as though he's been eating a slice of Proust's madeleine cake. "I saw Lonnie Donegan play when I was a little younger and he was also a remarkable performing presence, like Bechet," he continues. "You just know when you're in the presence of somebody who's at ease with 'this is what I do'. Of course you're going to like it, because they're comfortable with playing for people. I got that from Bechet and Donegan."

And a final reminiscence: "Numar Lubin, the boss of Nimbus Records, who lived in the same Paris apartment block as Bechet in the 1930s, told me that he heard Bechet practising. Day after day after day the routine was the same. He'd play scales and arpeggios, and then make very strange animal noises. One day he asked Sidney, 'What's all that stuff at the end?' And Bechet said, 'You know, I sometimes wonder if what they call music is the real music.' Where sound and noise turns into music, and where music turns into sound and noise? That's a very interesting place to be."

Music and noise are the polarities that continue to define Evan Parker's work to this day. As we sit around his kitchen table in the Kent town of Faversham, where he's lived for two years, Parker is thinking about how the rest of 2007 is stretching out before him. He's about to throw himself into the spectacular sonic unknown in a six-date tour given the tag 'Free Noise', pitching his saxophones against Yellow Swans, John Wiese, Metalux and C Spencer Yeh (aka Burning Star Core), with only bassist John Edwards and drummer Paul Hession to cover his dignity. Later in the year, at the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, he will unveil a new incarnation of his longstanding Electro-Acoustic Ensemble, this time with Peter Evans (trumpet), Ko Ishikawa (sho) and Ned Rothenberg (reeds) interweaving between the ensemble's labyrinth of electronic signalling and in-the-moment sound processing. The clarity of The Electro-Acoustic Ensemble's soundscape is the antithesis of 'noise' – at least noisy noise. This noise is transparent and evolves with a tactical meticulousness, as if the sounds were being directed by David Lynch.

"I think there's a general consensus that what we're trying to do in The Electro-Acoustic Ensemble should not be possible," Parker reflects. "That was articulated very early on by Tim Hodgkinson, who seemed sure there was a good theoretical reason why this approach to improvisation couldn't work. He

wrote in a review that it can't happen because the relationship between the signals and the musicians is too slow. It's certainly true that the speed of interaction at the level of specific detail just isn't there. But it's not like we don't realise. What there is, however, is something other than that, so why not look at what we can do? Because of this relationship between electronics and instruments it wouldn't make sense to do 90-second pieces. It's for concert length. It's my relationship to symphonic form. Well, that's tongue in cheek, but that's as serious as I can get about symphonic form."

Look back to 1996, the last time Parker was interviewed here (*The Wire* 144), and there's an agnostic outlook to his thoughts on some aspects of emerging digital technology, especially methods of post-production. However, being represented as an unplugged Luddite strikes him as unfair. "Don't forget The Electro-Acoustic Ensemble started in 1990 and before that I had no specific problems with electronics," he counters. "The duo work I'd done with Walter Prati made me aware of new developments in computer based technology, and there were always people around me like Barry Guy, Paul Rutherford, Paul Lytton and Hugh Davies doing stuff with electronics that I found interesting. Before that, I'd met the Musica Elettronica Viva guys in Italy at the end of the 1960s, and watching how they'd change their instruments was a litmus test of where the technology was headed. What interests me is how people can come along and make a difference – like Spring Heel Jack's Ashley Wales and John Coxon – rather than coming along to fit in.

"There's lots of ways to understand 'electronic music', from something very primitive to something absolutely sophisticated," he asserts. "It's not that I've been invited to IRCAM to work with some magnificent mainframe computer. 40 years ago it was Hugh with contact microphones and ring modulators, then it was the DX7 for a while. But in the meantime George Lewis and his Voyager program cracked the walls down, and the whole need for mainframes is not what it was. I'd say that I've had a continuous relationship with electronics."

Parker's friendship with Spring Heel Jack has been as unlikely as it's been fruitful. Beginning their association on Thirsty Ear Records, Parker's appearance on *Masses* (2001) is as one voice in a choir of improvisors dominated by New Yorkers like Mat Maneri, Roy Campbell, Daniel Carter and Matthew Shipp. As the Parker-Spring Heel Jack relationship has evolved, a more specific patois has emerged. In 2003 a UK tour featuring Parker and Spring Heel Jack with Shipp, William Parker, J Spaceman and wild card drummer Han Bennink created a magnificent counterpoint of groove based jazz, improvisation and electronica as each party played to their strengths; *The Sweetness Of The Water* in 2004 paired Parker with trumpeter Wadada Leo Smith for a more noticeably austere and benevolently cut-throat experience. Then, later the same year, came the disarmingly charming Evan Parker With Birds on Spring Heel Jack's own Treader label, featuring Parker's chirping saxophones against Coxon and Wales's forest of birdsong soundscapes. Just as our conversation turns to Spring Heel Jack, Parker's mobile phone rings and John Coxon's

name lights up the caller display. After he's hung up, Parker praises the duo's enthusiasm, suggesting that he sees something of his younger self in their idealism and appetite for new musical experiences. The evolution of The Electro-Acoustic Ensemble has been documented on ECM Records, beginning in 1996 with *Toward The Margins*. Eleventh Hour, the latest instalment, embedding FURT duo Richard Barrett and Paul Obermayer into the line-up, was released in 2005. Reports that The Ensemble's appearance at the 2006 London Jazz Festival projected a busier and craggier music than their recorded history makes me wonder what impact the ECM ethos has made on the project. Parker sees it more as a fortunate meeting of minds than the group being moulded after the ECM vision. "We're working so much already with reverbs and delays that to add overall reverb isn't really necessary," he thinks. "Clarity and reverb are, anyway, two ends of the same thing. If you drive reverb to the limit, clarity disappears, so perhaps the idea that you can have reverb and clarity has been the great ECM discovery."

How does Parker view the set-up of the ensemble, compared to a conventional improvisation group? "For Huddersfield," he says, "I've already abandoned one broad structure because it's far too like a particular Scelsi piece, and enough versions of that idea already exist. The thing I'd like to avoid is playing better at the soundcheck than at the concert, and I'm trying to understand why. I think probably I have to let go more and be happy with what happens.

"With this ensemble I can go almost to the point where I'm not playing the saxophone," he elucidates. "If it can sound as I want it to without me doing anything then that's perfect. If I have to nudge it into place, that's acceptable. I like the sound of improvisation, so already there's a horrible contradiction between me being the leader and that thing I like – the sound of people doing what they feel like doing. In practice, it works because I've thought carefully about the combinations."

Those combinations – are they timbral, structural, instrumental? "All of the above, but I don't think we play enough with The Ensemble for the music to evolve from gig to gig," says Parker. "There's more a sense of starting from scratch than with any other group I've worked with. The software based instruments are constantly evolving, so the musicians are always looking to try stuff that technologically they couldn't do last time. I turn up with a saxophone and it's still a saxophone, but these other things perpetually change. I like that very much."

The paradox that Parker has spent 40 years refining one of the most individual saxophone sounds around to sink it in an ensemble where "I'm not playing the saxophone" is laughed off with a shrug. But he's right – the textures in the ensemble linger in an enigmatic noise/music hinterland where too much instrumental gerrymandering would tip the scales explicitly towards the syntax of conventional music. If Parker abdicates hardcore soloing duties in The Ensemble with good reason, it's possible that the forthcoming Free Noise tour might have a similar effect by cock-up rather than conspiracy. What strategies can be deployed against white noise? "It reminds me of something that happened recently at an event to mark the passing of Paul Burwell, when

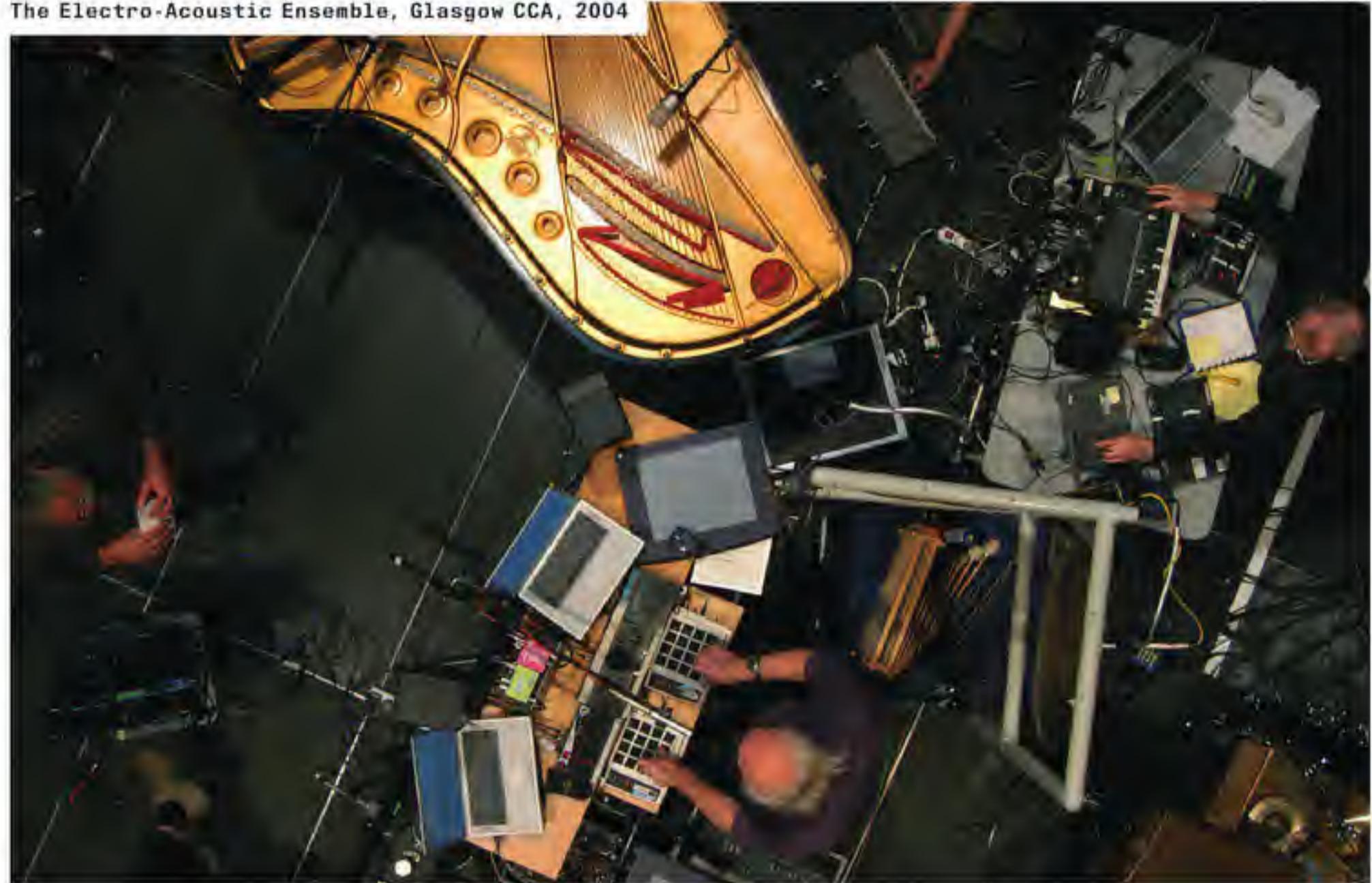


I played briefly with David Toop," he remembers. "David told me he was going to play loud – and he played really loud. I was lost in the mix, but actually I quite like being buried in the mix. I like contributing to layering, and in that situation there's no point in looking for point to point interaction.

"You're in the lap of the sound engineer," he continues. "A saxophone will never stand up to things that are miked or using pickups. It's difficult to talk about the project because it hasn't happened yet, but it's already changed a lot for me. [Drummer] Chris Corsano was going to be involved. We've done trio playing together with John Edwards, so I thought that bit was guaranteed and I can find my way through the rest of it. Now Chris is working with Björk and so we have Paul Hession. I'm guessing the tenor-bass-drums thing will be the banker for the situation – then I have to be more adventurous and find out what else is there."

Saxophone, bass and drums – a cornerstone jazz instrumentation famous from Albert Ayler's Spiritual Unity, Sonny Rollins's Way Out West and Ornette Coleman's great 1960s trio. For improvisors of Parker's generation, a relationship with jazz can be love/hate; love the inspiration of the American pioneers who stuck their necks out to establish the music, hate the creative get-out clause of expedient licks while hating even more jazz's usurpation as 'America's classical music' by the exclusive, regressive attitudes of Wyntonism. Parker's own relationship to jazz has been noticeably relaxed. He's played Benny Goodman hits with the big band led by Rolling Stones drummer Charlie Watts, and was a regular member of Chris McGregor's Brotherhood Of Breath. His work with trumpeter Kenny Wheeler dates back to the salad days of the Little Theatre Club, when both musicians were associated with drummer John Stevens, and Parker has been able to define his own niche within the pastoral key and time signatures of Wheeler's later scored compositions. Two recent CDs of duologues with Stan Tracey, suspensions & anticipations and crevulations (psi), find Parker nudging the veteran jazz pianist away from the marrow of his jazz language for the first time on record since the 1970s, when Tracey took an interest in freeform music.

The Electro-Acoustic Ensemble, Glasgow CCA, 2004



Whenever Parker is faced with 'jazz', his instinct is to plug in his own preoccupations.

"Some of that's to do with the context and the places," he reveals, as I suggest the jazz roots of his tenor playing have become more discernible over the past decade. "Take the Vortex [in North London], for instance, a club where I play once a month with a band of my choosing. Given its history and the other things that happen there, it's not the right place for a chamber music based approach to improvisation. Here you need robust music, and I like playing with bass and drums. Now you're dealing with a weight of expectations that channel music in a particular way. The challenge is to stay in that channel but keep it fresh and alive."

If The Electro-Acoustic Ensemble are Parker 'making sense' of the Xenakis part of his Brussels equation, then it's been in German pianist Alexander von

Parker in discussion with Courtney Pine (far right) during a Charlie Watts Orchestra rehearsal in 1986



Schlippenbach's trio (with bassist Paul Lovens) that he has most regularly, and explicitly, explored his inner Bechet. The trio has a history dating back to the early 1970s, and Parker says they'll tour once a year "until one of us drops". Schlippenbach himself states unambiguously in the sleeve notes to the group's latest CD, *Winterreise* (psi), that "es ist Free Jazz", a categorisation Parker feels content to embrace.

"I go with Alex's idea about that," he confirms. "Apart from the generic implications of 'free jazz', the music obviously comes out of the very specific tradition of the Cecil Taylor-Jimmy Lyons-Sunny Murray trio." How does Parker feel about the ever-present danger of 'Wyntonising' that model, of imitation rather than inspiration? "The most articulate statements on the hardening of a classicised language of 'modern jazz' came from Steve Lacy, who coined the term 're-bop', and it opens up many problems of definition," he explains. "For some people, clearly, the language of licks is the language of jazz. Other people think, 'If we don't do that, what's left?' That's obviously where Cecil comes from, but there are still those who would insist that's 'not jazz'. A lick is something very solid and easy to teach. Go away and learn your lick in all keys. That'll keep you busy. But at the end of three years what you've got is stuff that was already known. Other things, like creativity, thinking of something that hasn't been done already, are not so easy to teach."

"Alex's definition does, in a certain sense, limit the places where appropriate growth is left," Parker continues. "The life of that particular group steers a course between the attractions of siren calls from the rocks of improvised music and the safety of the known. There are overlaps – Lovens plays with Axel Dörner, I play with computers and electronics, and Alex has started collaborating with George Lewis and the Voyager program. But that group represents a deliberately restricted set of priorities. The further we move away from that, the less it becomes appropriate to call it 'free jazz'."

Parker's grounding in the music of John Coltrane – particularly the saxophonist's tumultuous Impulse! era – seems so absolute that other inspirations are sometimes overlooked. Dave Brubeck saxophonist Paul Desmond is often cited as a formative inspiration, and Parker corroborates that at the start "I very much wanted to play like Desmond – he was a very considered builder of lines." But then other figures beckoned. "Desmond was never especially interested in throwing himself over the cliff edge, and that's the difference between him and Lee Konitz, for example," he continues. "They're working broadly in the same language, but Konitz is more of a risk taker. Then with Coltrane you're going to a different room in the house, one with many more danger signs on the doors."

Coltrane's revolution transcended strictly musical preoccupations because his work demonstrated forceful awareness of the social conditions surrounding its creation – he led rather than followed, with the fabric and structures of his music symbolising his vision of change. 40 years after his death, too many disciples have reduced Coltrane's legacy to patterning

and learnt emotions by mistakenly divorcing the technicalities of the music from its politics. Parker, however, thinks the politics that drove Coltrane have not gone away in 2007. "To think anything else would be to accept an end of history scenario, which I don't for a minute," he affirms. "I don't think the music's meaning in terms of personal liberation for the players has changed at all, and striving for liberation should communicate itself to the audience. As soon as people realise that these hierarchies that rule us depend on a mass of people at the bottom doing what they're told, then the Emperor's Clothes aspect of our so-called leaders will be seen for what they are. It can't happen soon enough for me. If you look at the rather portentous notes I stuck in with *The Topography Of The Lungs* back in 1970, I still think those ideas remain relevant. That tradition of socialism has – has – to come back. Tony Blair can't wish it away, because it's a grand tradition. We don't need to worry about the failures of Marxism, because in this country we have a robust socialist tradition that goes all the way back to the 17th century."

"Politics is often underrepresented in discussions of Coltrane," he avers. "The emphasis is always put on the manic saxophone practice and the super technician, and not enough attention is paid to his philosophical inclinations. While he was still with Impulse! he was already looking for opportunities to help younger musicians and do something for the community. That's more important than any ideological label like 'Marxist' or whatever. When his Impulse! contract came to an end and he was selling enough records to bargain, he put out the first version of *Cosmic Music* by himself. He was prepared to take it to that point, to say to Impulse! that 'I'll sign a new contract if you're prepared to do these extra things, if not I'll do it myself'. A very brave decision at that stage in his life – and that's real politics."

When it comes to having power and heading up hierarchies, Evan Parker himself, of course, reigns supreme over the European improvisation scene. With the launch of his own label, psi, in 2001, his patronage and ability to grant honours have escalated. How does he view those responsibilities, and the truism that power ultimately corrupts? "There are ways to use power positively," he rebuts.

"Employing musicians in contexts which I think will be favourable to their work is one, and through the record company I can offer things to people, maybe before anybody else can." Like Peter Evans, the wunderkind New York trumpeter who issued his debut solo recording, *More Is More*, on psi in 2006? "Perfect example, and doing that record has had a remarkable effect. Of course it's horrible that a 'fast track' exists and that I – somehow – have the ability to confer this advantage. But what else can you do? The guy's exceptionally talented and you're not sure any other label will respond. If he wants it out – yeah, I'll put it out. It's perfectly possible that the benefit is all mine, because I look good in relation to that, but the future of the music is there. Responsibilities are privileges seen the other way round, and I'm looking outwards."

"The thing I struggle with, though, is finding a formulation to thank people who buy the CDs. There's a problem – the people who steal most music are the people who buy most music. You can't demonise people for copying CDs. All you can do is thank them for buying the bit they buy. Buy ten and get one free? How would I do that? I'm not sure, but if you're buying psi CDs, thank you, because you make it possible for us to carry on."

The Topography Of The Lungs, Parker's defining 1970 trio record with guitarist Derek Bailey and percussionist Han Bennink, unwittingly became the Clockwork Orange of improvised music – an essential document snatched from circulation because of extra-musical skullduggery. The relationship between Bailey and Parker was fraught and angry by default, and eventually their irreconcilable differences led to the sour break-up of Incus Records, the company they had co-founded with drummer Tony Oxley. But perhaps a divorce was always somewhere on the spectrum between probable and inevitable. Bailey – the arch proponent of 'non-idiomatic improvisation' – who in September 2004 claimed that jazz "died in 1955" (*The Wire* 247), was necessarily going to have issues with the Coltrane-absorbed Parker.

A condition of the Bailey-Parker division of Incus was that *Topography Of The Lungs* was not to be reissued as long as Bailey remained a director. "That was a strange extra clause Derek wanted," Parker



At London Queen Elizabeth Hall, 2006



With Derek Bailey, mid-1980s, shortly before the Incus split

recalls. "We were negotiating through the accountant because he was so abusive I didn't want to take telephone calls. I knew it was a weird request and there was absolutely no grounds for it. The principle of the division was that we each take our own projects, and third party projects should go back to the third parties. The idea that it shouldn't be reissued was thrown in as a rider, but I was so anxious to get it over I agreed."

Bailey's death at the end of 2005 permitted Parker to issue the first CD version of *Topography Of The Lungs* on psi, and an expectant mystique surrounding this 'lost' document was finally satisfied. "I still think it sounds a good record," Parker says, assessing their work 37 years on. "At the technical level, I was very much interested in articulation and flutter tonguing. That characterised the stuff for a long time. I heard a tape of me playing with Paul Lytton in Berlin in 1974 recently and it's full of saxophone playing that's even more in your face than this. We thought at the time this is energy, this is life, and now I'm thinking – all that's true, but give me a break." Can Parker explain the record's inherent streak of violence? "The dryness of the recording – there was a lot of reverb in the studio and the mics were fairly close. But it's not a complete travesty of how we would have sounded at that time, even in a room with a sympathetic acoustic."

But was there a breakout of the DBs EPs? "Yes, very specifically on that date," Parker clarifies. "Han and I had been on Parliament Hill Fields in the afternoon, and we'd gone to meet friends who'd just come back from Ibiza, and they'd also been to Nepal and brought back some of the long horns. Han played one and they were so blown away they gave him the biggest horn. Then we got stuck in horrible traffic and we were late. Derek was furious – he said that he'd waited for us for 20 minutes, so now we'd have to wait for him and he went out for a walk. That's where we began from. I think he liked to play off a certain kind of anger – 'adrenergia', let's call it. That kind of thing happened often enough for me to see it as

a pattern. Or maybe it was just me who drove him to distraction. That's also possible. But eventually I thought I've had enough of this shit."

Fishing for more clarity about their split, I tell Parker that speculation over the years about what really happened has bordered on JFK-like conspiracy theories – that he and Bailey were involved in a love triangle, that the schism was directly political, or about money. Parker takes time to ponder the options before he answers. "It wasn't about politics; there was no woman," he asserts. "Money? Not exactly, but there was tension about the use of resources within Incus. It was more about our different sense of what the relationship was. I was trying to make it equal, but Derek's view was always that it was his job to think of things for me to do, and that I'd do them unquestioningly. It was an inherent clash of longterm views.

"Derek defined improvisation as a series of negatives," Parker continues, as I ask how their disagreements manifested themselves musically. "It's not free jazz, he didn't like saxophones – his theory was internally inconsistent, in my view. The idea that practising at home improves your capacity to improvise while playing with a particular combination of people diminishes this ability is having your cake and eating it. He painted himself into a corner with 'non-idiomatic improvisation', and spent a lot of time inventing situations to support the theory."

One of the most talked about aspects of the aforementioned Bailey interview was a picturesque dream sequence, portraying Evan begging on the streets having failed to schmooze Arts Council bureaucrats. "I haven't got a clue where that came from," Parker retorts. "Many more hurtful things were said by Derek, so it's not the insult, it's the specifics that are annoying. My dealings with the Arts Council came to an end years ago. Ironically, in the early 70s, when I was on what they called the jazz sub-committee of the Arts Council, Derek was the only person who took me up on my suggestion that

people applied for money. I took it as my job to represent a constituency, and I told everyone that if I can do anything to push your case, I'll do it. The funding for Company [Bailey's improvisation ensemble] came that way, from the Arts Council! But the last thing to look for with Derek was common sense. You got quick gags – one-liners – in interviews, but factual accuracy was neither here nor there."

Thinking across the history of the improvised music scene, drawing together loose ends. When the histories are written, Parker's outstanding legacy will perhaps be that he was the great traverser of overlaps – a musician able to meaningfully contribute to the axes represented by jazz, by John Stevens's Spontaneous Music Ensemble and by the methodology of Improv collective AMM. "It's been very useful to think of that AMM approach, for which I use the term 'laminar,'" says Parker. "Each musician takes responsibility for a strata within the music and they are not so much worried about locking the layers together. In SME locking together was everything. Then the Music Improvisation Company was – for me – a synthesis of those two approaches. Listening over the past ten or 15 years, I've thought that gradually a lingua franca of improvised music has evolved from those three possibilities."

Aging – more specifically how the topography of the lungs shifts with age – becomes an increasing concern for wind players. But history is catching up with the fighting fit Parker, now 63, for more banal reasons. Back in the 1970s, convinced that glass reinforced plastic reeds were the future, he bought a job lot, and three decades on he's running out. "I know this is more appropriate for a reed players' magazine, but it's a real dilemma," Parker reveals, drolly aware that he's precariously hovering around anorak territory. "The ones left are unpredictable and I can't always get them to play, so I've been working with another type, much more like the traditional cane reed. I did a solo concert in an art gallery in Sweden recently and I changed reeds for one piece just to see what would happen. It's a challenge because I know what I can do, and if I don't get to certain places I'm easily disappointed."

Derek Bailey's death, reissuing *Topography Of The Lungs* (originally Incus 1) and reaching the end of his reeds bring some aspects of Parker's life full circle. But he's serene. "I listen to earlier things and talk about lung capacity!" he concludes. "But I don't want to do that anymore, and that's the fortunate thing – my musical appetite is aging with my body. From your side, perhaps, that looks like complacency, but seen this way it's more like applied intelligence. I fantasise about the last period of my life being practice only – no gigs, no other pressures – practice for the sake of practice. It's such a beautiful, simplified set of problems and relationships. I've pared the whole thing down to its core... the relationship between me and the instrument. That would be a marvellous way to finish." □ The CMN Free Noise tour begins this month. See Out There for details

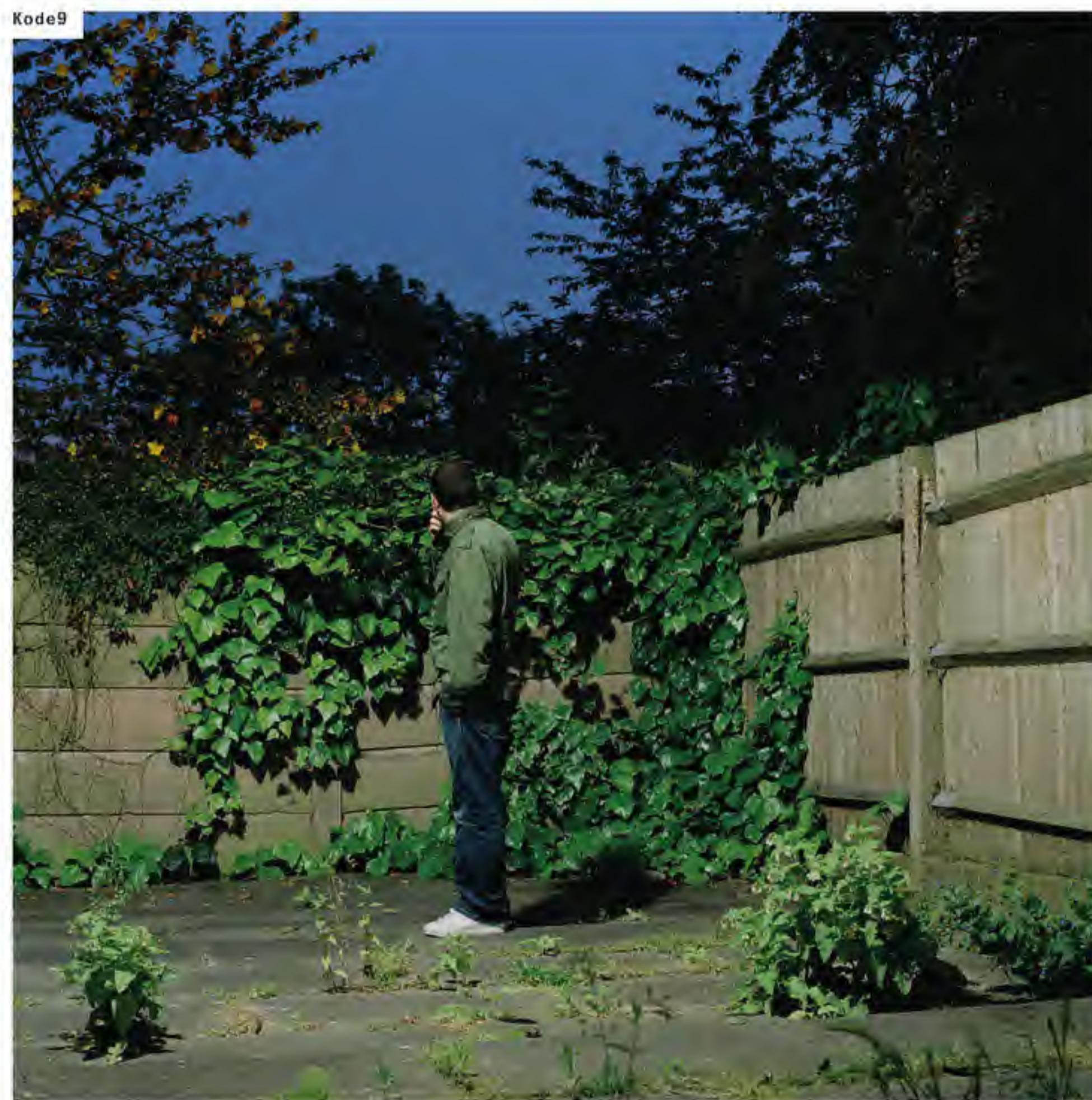


The Primer

An occasional guide to the selected recordings of a particular artist or genre. This month: Derek Walmsley submits to the urban bass pressure of a peculiarly London-centric dance mutation, tracking dubstep's progress from apocalyptic Garage into a stark, brooding instrumental form.

Illustration: Savage Pencil

Dubstep





No matter which pieces of vinyl you buy, what equipment you play them on, or how much you crank up the bass, the true low end experience can never be appreciated except in a proper club or sound system. It pulses through your body, prickles the skin, presses upon your face, confounds sensations of distance and depth. The feeling of bass is a crucial component of virtually all contemporary dance music. Dubstep is unique in the last 20 years, however, in taking the appreciation of bass to the level of obsession. This search for the killer bass vibration begins at the end of the 1990s, at what seemed to be the end of the rave continuum that runs through London underground music from the late 80s onwards. By this point drum 'n' bass had grown mechanistic and soulless; the effervescent sound of two-step Garage had been subsumed into the bland lifestyle branding of "House and Garage"; and cocaine, a divisive vibe-killer compared with other club stimulants, was cheaper and more prevalent than ever. The vestiges of rave subculture – club nights, pirate radio stations, independent record shops – moved further to the peripheries.

Dubstep and Grime developed in these margins. Each took the smooth surfaces of Garage and inscribed upon it the harsh mark of urban life. Grime added a caustic layer of lyrical bravado; dubstep unravelled Garage into stark, brooding instrumentals. But dubstep's roots run deeper. While many Grime MCs were still playing around on their big brother's record decks, adventurous Garage producers were making close, heavy headphone music and storing it away on their hard drives like secret weaponry. This search for killer basslines began as London dance music began to fall apart, as if the only way to reconstruct the edifice of rave was to find an atomic glue to bind it back together again.

In the wilderness years of the early 2000s, Grime and dubstep shared the pirate radio airwaves on

stations such as Rinse FM, nurturing initiates through online message boards and shared MP3s. But the genres developed in opposite directions. Grime radio shows were about battle-ready MCs and splattering beats, compared to the subtle bass pressure of a dubstep set. If Grime was a shout of self-assertion, dubstep became an echo of the bass vibrations that coursed through London music in the 90s, a radar beacon for the post-rave diaspora. There's also the question of location. Grime's principal breeding ground was East London, where densely populated estates in Limehouse and Bow are confined and criss-crossed by highways ferrying commuters through the old dockland areas. Dubstep was nurtured in South London, whose languid suburban sprawl falls beyond the capital's underground train network, among the meandering overground routes and old industrial canal ways that have shaped a different pace of life compared to the rest of the city. The compact vertical layering of Grime and the rippling horizontal echoes of dubstep mirror the geography of their origins.

Dubstep began to emerge as a club phenomenon in 2005, triggered by tracks such as Skream's "Midnight Request Line", which filtered through to both Grime and minimal Techno. During the years in the wilderness, dubstep had infused London influences as various as digidub, Jungle and Techno. The obsessive bass fetishism of the early years now took on a more reverent and melodic quality, more akin to a love affair rather than an addiction. Dubstep started out in the early 2000s as a form of escape, but it soon took on a feeling of communion, completing a journey that explored the dark side before returning to the light. By relocating Garage around a central, omnipresent bass, dubstep had also performed a sonic inversion of the drum 'n' bass sound that had changed the course of 90s

dance music – percussion was now peripheral while the bass established the music's heartbeat. It's no coincidence that Jungle 12"s can sound like dubstep when pitched down to 33 rpm, while a dubstep 12" sped up to 45 rpm can evoke the manic sounds of drum 'n' bass.

More importantly, this exile had impressed upon its practitioners what was at stake. London dance music could only resist the gentrifying blandness of House and R&B if dubstep stood up to be counted. Thereafter, the scene has aimed to recreate the spirit of rave in a new musical mode. Dubstep nights are all about prolonging the good vibes, with strikingly positive and almost uncannily polite crowds. This synthesis of all that was good about rave runs counter to the pigeonholing tendencies of almost all contemporary dance music. Borrowing organically from all underground forms, dubstep pumps fresh blood through the ossifying structures of dance culture. Harking back to the golden years of rave in this manner, dubstep is imbued with nostalgia as much as futurism, and its search for lost utopias is timely in an era when technology is as much a threat to humankind as a comfort. Tracks by the likes of Burial and Shackleton are among the most elegiac and expressive electronic music has to offer.

But the bass is both dubstep's foundation and the core of its strength. The dubstep low-end is warm and pliable, in contrast to the cold bassline body shots of Techno. The constant vibration offers womb-like solace amid the dislocated and fragmentary experience of modern life. Whether the scene as a whole will remain a blissful bubble of holistic positivity, spawn new and challenging mutations, or perhaps even burst under the weight of influences and ideas now channelling into it, remains to be seen. For now, dubstep's bass is as warm, welcoming and rapturous as it has ever been.

Loefah





stutter to a halt as if they've stumbled up a dark alley, a ragga vocal bears witness to the weight of the bass: "We're all inside, lock the studio, turn off the lights... Come heavy, can't stop telling them me buck and bury."

But Horsepower Productions, also featured on *The Roots Of Dubstep*, did most to map Garage's expressive outer limits. The prolific trio of Benny III, Nassis and Lev Jnr released a series of genre-defining 12"s on Garage label Tempa and drum 'n' bass label No U Turn's Garage offshoot, Turn U On Records. The interplay of the percussion alone can be spine-tingling – skittish snares and deft rimshots are mixed up with the punchbag thud of the kick drum. In *Fine Style* collects seven tracks from their back catalogue with six new productions. The percussion provides effortless perpetual motion while humming basslines, melodic droplets and noir dialogue slowly shift in parallax planes. In "Gorgon Sound", the rippling echoes begin to overlap and resonate, forming waves and crests that recall the aquatic House of Basic Channel.

DJ Hatcha

Dub Express

TEMPA 12" 2003

Various

Tempa Allstars Volume 2

TEMPA 12" 2004

In 2003, dubstep was simply 'the Croydon sound', and in this bleak wilderness of the post-two-step years, much of the residual activity in the nascent dubstep scene can be traced back to a single South London record shop and uptown club night. DJ Hatcha manned the counter at Croydon's premier Garage shop Big Apple Records, and here he met likeminded producers Skream and Digital Mystikz, cutting dubplates of their tracks for his sets at the intimate

Garage night FWD>> (originally held at the Velvet Rooms before moving to Shoreditch's Plastic People to take advantage of its specially designed sound system). In these early years, dubstep was a somewhat insular scene, with FWD>> frequently only half-full, and Hatcha holding a monopoly on dubs from many of the up and coming producers. But his determined pushing of early dubstep took the music from a cul de sac of adventurous Garage B sides towards a viable dance genre in its own right. Functional titles such as "Dub Express" and "Conga Therapy" provide a clue to the relentless physicality of early Hatcha DJ sets, with shuddering beats and skanking melodies barely able to settle into a single groove.

Hatcha and Big Apple were not the only players in the early years, however. Ammunition, the management behind FWD>>, also ran the influential Tempa label, whose first releases were almost entirely dedicated to the prolific Horsepower team. The first few Tempa Allstars EPs and Dubstep Allstars CDs are a snapshot of the raw energy driving this new sound, which FWD>> labelled 'dubstep'. The double 12" pack Tempa Allstars Volume 2 is a vital snapshot of its early contrasting styles. The exotically titled "Amazon" and "Congo" from old heads El-B and Geeneus epitomise the rolling lushness of the old Garage sound, whereas tracks from newer producers such as Kode9, Digital Mystikz and Loefah explore bleaker, more forbidding spaces. The stark percussion of Digital Mystikz' "Give Jah Glory" juts up like mountain peaks at the edge of a rolling plain. D1's demented "Crack Bong" is the EP's boldest statement, with a bassline as thick and fat as a steel drum, and an appropriately manic snatch of dialogue from 2001: A Space Odyssey: "My mind is going... there is no question about it..."

At the time of the EP's release, the label's ostentatious granting of "allstar" status to its roster

Various

The Roots Of Dubstep

TEMPA CD 2006

Horsepower Productions

In Fine Style

TEMPA CD 2002

Dubstep may borrow reggae's bassline pressure and Jungle's low-end splatter, but you find its principal aesthetic in the London Garage scene of the late 1990s. The two-step Garage scene of the time condensed Jungle's breakbeat pressure to a ripe rhythmic bump. Simple enough for easy dancefloor pleasures, its lush layers of EQed detail were also compelling listening in their own right. Whereas Garage's vocal tracks celebrated romantic and/or sexual union, its dubbed out B sides explored the genre's sensuous qualities in extended mixes that map terrain similar to that of Arthur Russell. This is where the many Jungle producers who had jumped ship to Garage, such as Foul Play's Steve Gurley, got a chance to show off their production by exploring the deeper side of Garage.

Producers such as Gurley and El-B (the latter a member of Garage crew Groove Chronicles) were initially better known for their remixes than their own tracks, but soon developed instantly identifiable styles, engulfing vocal tracks with diving basslines and explosive effects. Both feature on *The Roots Of Dubstep*, which compiles many of the elusive, vinyl-only releases that formed the foundation of contemporary dubstep. Gurley's "Hotboys" dub employs only the most perfunctory melody, but its chopped and filtered percussion provide enough gratuitous hooks for a whole Timbaland album. El-B's "Buck And Bury" is equally compelling in an altogether bleaker mode. While keyboard lines



DJ Hatcha



Digital Mystikz

of artists seemed unwarranted for such an embryonic scene. But the strategy of strength in numbers reaped a host of other benefits, not least by neatly summarising the diverse trajectories contained in early dubstep. The artists on Tempa Allstars Volume 2 are still defining the rules of engagement with the music, exploring the perceived limitations of dubstep – its sparseness, synthetic qualities and primarily instrumental nature – and forging its most enduring qualities.

Various Grime 2

REPHLEX CD 2004

Despite their contrasting styles, there has always been a significant degree of cross-fertilisation between dubstep and Grime. Instrumentals such as Wonder's "What" and Plastician's "Cha" proved indispensable DJ tools for both before either term had stuck as a label for the music. So when Rephlex, assisted by the management behind Tempa and FWD>>, decided their Grime compilation would focus on instrumentals, it was potentially somewhat misleading, though understandable given the fluidity of the new sounds. Even allowing for mislabelling, however, the first Grime compilation (from 2004) was something of a dud. A set of utilitarian underground bangers devoid of the MC chat that brought them to life on pirate radio, it was neither properly Grime nor exactly dubstep, owing more to the darker side of rave than to the lineage of Garage.

But the second Grime compilation revealed a crucial change in emphasis. Indeed, it stands as a landmark in dubstep's development. By contemporary standards, the basslines are tame and the track structures extremely simple, but the detail is simply mesmerising. The murky, rave-tape ambience of the first compilation is superseded by crisp, detailed sound palette. On Kode9's "Ping", sample libraries have been plundered for accordions, bells and musique concrète effects reminiscent of the BBC Radiophonic Workshop, and they are scattered in a beguilingly serene manner that recalls Wu-Tang productions. Digital Mystikz, the South London production team of Coki and Mala brought through by DJ Hatcha at Big Apple, provide the album's

standout moments. On "Country Man", snares ping-pong around the echo chamber like bullets in a sealed room; "Cr7 Chamber" uses springy gamelan hits to provide it with extra bounce.

From the perspective of the actual MC-led Grime of the era, the repetitive nature of the material on Grime 2 seemed somewhat basic. With hindsight, these tracks remain remarkably challenging; an electronic glide over alien terrain, seeking out new angles and contours.

Digital Mystikz

Chainba
DMZ 12" 2004

Coki
Officer/Mood Dub
DMZ 12" 2005

Mala
Left Leg Out/Blue Notez
DMZ 12" 2006

After gracing Grime 2, Digital Mystikz concentrated on their own DMZ label with fellow Grime alumnus Loefah. The early Digital Mystikz releases on DMZ extrapolated from the edgy brilliance of their contributions to that Rephlex compilation. "Chainba" exudes a fractured, asymmetric energy, percussion hits skittering across a glacial surface of bleep and bass. If this debut release was somewhat alien, by the time of the follow-up "Lost City" (DMZ 12" 2004), it was as if they'd gone wholly native. A dub bassline is brutally filtered until it evokes an angry hornet and percussion of every description is perversely mangled in the echo chamber.

2005 saw the launch of the DMZ club at the cavernous spaces of Mass in Brixton, and the night was instrumental in teleporting dubstep out of the margins of dance culture and into the popular imagination. The sweaty DMZ crowd has little room for those passively soaking up the bass; it is a dynamic raving massive, feeding off rewinds and back to back DJ soundclashes. With the club's hefty sound system came a renewed focus on pure, undivided heaviness, and the snatches of reggae that echoed around the early 12"s began to form the foundation of the Digital Mystikz sound. It's also evident on Coki's solo 12": "Officer" takes dubwise



Skream



bass into cosmic regions, with a husky, tremulous bassline that sounds like it's carried on the wind, and wheezing trumpets reminiscent of The Specials' "Ghost Town". Occasionally, as on "All Of A Sudden" (as featured on Dubstep Allstars Vol 4), Digital Mystikz lapse into a virtual reproduction of the 80s digi-dub of Alpha & Omega or Conscious Sounds.

But a more eclectic approach of recent months has attempted to widen dubstep's horizons beyond the half-step dub trudge. When the duo channel their varied influences, which range from Techno to dancehall reggae, the results are highly innovative. Mala's "Left Leg Out" is a stark and compelling minimal roller in the vein of Lil' Louis's "French Kiss"; and his "Bury The Bwoy" (DMZ 12" 2006) is a menacing warrior charge that recalls the more primal reaches of On-U Sound's catalogue. If Digital Mystikz' later releases have lost some of the raw, neurotic charge of their early work, their earnest devotion to sub-bass has consolidated dubstep as a club phenomenon and strengthened links with the London sound system culture of Jah Shaka and Aba Shanti.

Benga & Skream

The Judgement
BIG APPLE 12" 2003

Skream

Skreamizm 2
TEMPA 2x12" 2006

Midnight Request Line
TEMPA 12" 2006

Tapped

TEMPA 12" 2006

Croydon's Ollie Jones aka Skream is dubstep's young prodigy, crafting hundreds of tracks on his PC before he was even old enough to drink in clubs. Like many prolific artists, his most enduring influence is his own previous work, and this fearless confidence in his abilities is both his strength and an occasional weakness. His self-titled 2006 album was a prime example of stretching himself too far, incorporating smooth jazzy beats and rash vocal collaborations. But throughout his career, his 12" releases have revealed a virtuoso's touch in radically adapting and reshaping his music.

Skream was working at Big Apple Records when he was barely a teenager. Honing his music skills at college, he began making beats on the downloadable Fruity Loops program with fellow Croydon resident Benga. Inspired by the bleak intensity of tracks such as El-B's "Buck And Bury", early Skream works such as his and Benga's "The Judgement" were volatile collisions of Acidic bass, trash movie samples and teeth-grinding textures akin to crushing metal. The positive vibes of the emerging DMZ sound turned his head around, however, and by 2005 he was using his music college experience to fashion a new melodic edge to his music. "Midnight Request Line", which circulated on dubplate for many months before its eventual release, was a breakthrough track not only for Skream himself, but also for the scene in general, crossing over to minimal Techno DJs like Ricardo Villalobos, and becoming a favourite for Grime MCs such as Roll Deep's Skepta to rhyme over. Each of these audiences found something different to cherish in its dense composition. The visceral bass drop launched a thousand Grime lyrics; the frictionless glide of the melody recalled Derrick May. Most importantly, its central key change singlehandedly removed dubstep from the noir-ish cinematic shade of the post-Horsepower period and into a new era of melodic expressionism, which arguably found its key articulation in Burial's self-titled album.

Just as essential is Skream's series of Skreamizm EPs. The aquatic skank of the first was a key influence on dubstep's embrace of heavy, halfstep beats, but in the second instalment the tempos are more fluid, the melodies more dramatic. The nominal chorus of "Welcome 2 The Future" triggers a succession of abrupt, double-time bass hits, as if the track's rhythmic gearbox had just smoothly clicked up a gear. The unravelling synth line of "Deep Concentration" recalls the precise, airy fusion of Herbie Hancock. But the instrumental cut of "Tapped" (a ragged vocal version featuring Boy Better Know's JME features on Skream's later debut album) is probably his most advanced track to date. Arpeggiated synths, modal chords and fat basslines are plaited together until it feels like all the available space (and

oxygen) is running out; like a car flashing through an underpass at night, the sense of enclosure only heightens the impression of speed.

Loefah

Horror Show
DMZ 12" 2004

Mud/Ruffage
DMZ 12" 2006

The Bug featuring Flowdan

Jah War (Loefah Remix)
NINJA TUNE 12" 2006

As a rule of thumb, the most pedestrian dubstep is that which ignores the rich percussive pizzazz of the Garage years in favour of a heavy, half-step trudge. The exception to the rule, and the man whose work inspired numerous copycat beats, is Loefah, another member of the original Big Apple gang and co-runner, with Digital Mystikz, of the DMZ night and label.

When it comes to basslines, Skream's may flash past your ears like a samurai sword, but no one cuts harder and deeper than Loefah. One of the original contributors to Rephlex's Grime 2, he became disenchanted with his tinny productions when DJ Hatcha gently mocked his use of hi-hats at the counter in Big Apple. "Fed up with bongos", he aimed for the loudest, cleanest mixdown possible, stripping out all extraneous elements and ramping up the bass. "Horror Show" pointed the way for his spare, architectural sound, with its kerb-crawling 70 bpm rhythm, echoed stabs like warning sirens in a spacecraft hangar, and an indefinable sense of unease emanating from garbled voices deep in the mix. A couple of years down the line, "Ruffage" brought his style to something approaching perfection. Interpolating influences from hiphop and electro, the kickdrum and bass are as dense as a supernova, while echoes of sparse melody create an almost vertiginous feeling of space.

A supremely forceful presence in the soundsystems of FWD>> and DMZ, where his DJing persona approaches that of a Japanese Yakuza, smoking slowly and impassively as panic ensues around him, Loefah's tracks feel implosive as much as explosive. The impact of his half-step is so potent that a

double-time 140 bpm feel is somehow implied, as if the brutal rigor mortis of the beats challenges your mind to fill in the empty gaps. His recent "Jah War" remix, with a vocal from Roll Deep's Flowdan, is another awe-inspiringly heavy workout; its elastic bassline, like a bouncy asteroid of synthetic putty, guaranteeing a rewind in a club environment.

Kode9 & The Spaceape

Sine Of The Dub

HYPERDUB 10" 2004

Memories Of The Future

HYPERDUB CD 2006

Despite its limited output, Hyperdub, the label run by producer, writer and Rinse FM DJ Kode9, has been home to some of the most forward-looking music to emerge from dubstep. Kode9's own output goes back to the days of Tempa's Allstars and Rephlex's Grime compilations, where he dissected the carcass of Garage and carefully analysed the remains. "Babylon (Dub)" from Tempa Allstars Volume 2 (see above) takes a cross-section of Garage's rhythmic skip, using reverb and fuzz to tease apart the layers of hi-hat, clicks and snares. The first release on his own label, "Sine Of The Dub", took even more drastic measures. The warm bassline is replaced by an unrefined tone wave, and intermittent echoes are placed against a backdrop of airless, eerie silence. Spaceape's drawling vocal was chanced upon when he picked up the lyrics to Prince's "Sign 'O' The Times" in the studio and began adlibbing; his voice was then treated to resemble a man on his deathbed reciting his last will and testament. Such brutal reworking proves paradoxically close in spirit to that of Prince's apocalyptic original. The subsequent album, *Memories Of The Future*, explored equally perverse pleasures, the slow, ungainly funk of Kode9's beats and Spaceape's cavernous vocals evoking a future world of malfunctions and mutations.

Burial

South London Boroughs EP

HYPERDUB 12" 2005

Burial

HYPERDUB CD 2006

The most advanced dubstep to date has been the work of anonymous South London producer

Burial, who purportedly chanced upon Hyperdub through the Internet. While it's difficult to quantify exactly how much influence Burial has had on dubstep – certainly no one sounds exactly like him – one suspects that's primarily because other producers are still trying to grasp the impact of his work.

Inspired by the darkside drum 'n' bass of the Metalheadz label, Burial decided at the outset to avoid at all costs the rigid, mechanistic path that eventually brought drum 'n' bass to a standstill. To that end, his percussion patterns are intuitively arranged on the screen rather than rigidly

quantised, creating minute hesitations and slippages in the rhythm. His snares and hi-hats are covered in fuzz and phase, like cobwebs on forgotten instruments, and the mix is rough and ready rather than endlessly polished. Perhaps most importantly, his basslines sound like nothing else on Earth. Distorted and heavy, yet also warm and earthy, they resemble the balmy gust of air that precedes an underground train. Impersonal yet somehow familiar, the way Burial renders both intimacy and isolation via bass science is a key example of dubstep's capacity for emotional depth.

Burial's debut EP is a brooding journey through South London urban dread (the 'boroughs' of the title refers to the haphazard patchwork of London's local councils, and a suitably vaporous geographic reference for the empty spaces and lost zones of dubstep, in sharp contrast to the precisely demarcated 'ends' of Grime). The EP stands as dubstep's most abstract evocation of the modern cityscape; the title track features an arhythmic percussive skip, a bassline like a warm blast of city smog, and melodies that flicker into life like headlights on the ceiling of a darkened room. The Burial album mixes this brand of rolling, itinerant beats with disarmingly poignant Ambient interludes carrying titles such as "Gutted" and "Forgive". A melancholy tinge runs through the album, but the constant interplay of tension and calm, and of alienation and intimacy, offers the possibility of salvation around the next corner.

Boxcutter

Brood

HOTFLUSH 12" 2005

Toasty

Take It Personal

HOTFLUSH 12" 2005

Half a decade into dubstep's existence, London still exerts a powerful hold over the imagination. While the main DJs might be all based there, the Hotflush label has been instrumental in finding inspiration elsewhere, bringing through new producers and teasing out musical reference points beyond the familiar dubwise skank. Belfast's Boxcutter is one of a new generation of young producers from outside London. As technically gifted as any of the London crew, his "Brood" recalls the relentless, Gothic Junglist assault of Dom & Roland's "The Storm" or Adam F's "Metropolis". And not unlike Adam F, Boxcutter isn't immune to the odd jazzy interlude – the flipside's "Sunshine" is a curiously whimsical piece of fantasy fusion. On "Take It Personal", Brighton producer Toasty also begins outside the usual domains of Garage and reggae. Its shimmering strings and snatches of female vocal recall the ecstatic Jungle of early Moving Shadow releases. Such evocations of the golden eras of British underground music are indicative of dubstep's taste for nostalgia, tapping the memory banks of the rave generation for inspiration.

Benga & Hatcha

10 Tons Heavy EP

PLANET MU 12" 2006

Benga

Crunked Up

TEMPA 12" 2007

Even though he's by now a dubstep veteran, Benga's work has often been overshadowed by that of his Croydon cohorts. But in 2006 he stepped up his game dramatically, churning out a series of crowd-slaying beats to satisfy all but the most hardcore DMZ raver. "Ten Tons Heavy" and "Crunked Up" are built solely for the purpose of providing a massive bass drop, where brutal electro stabs cut through the crowd. The splattering intensity of these tracks is echoed in the movie dialogue of "10 Tons Heavy" – "He didn't just eat their bodies, he ate their souls... and I joined in." Recent Benga productions are among dubstep's



GEOGINA COOK



most ecstatically explosive moments; behind the decks, he has the demeanour of an underage teenager with a carrier bag of horror videos, mischievously anticipating the impending carnage.

Vex'd
Degenerate
PLANET MU 2xCD 2005

Pinch
Qawwali
PLANET MU 12" 2006

Mike Paradinas's Planet Mu label began life as a Virgin imprint back in the late 90s, with a prolific but inconsistent roster of IDM and drill 'n' bass artists. With the advent of dubstep, the label suddenly found a rich seam of homegrown talent to nurture, going on to produce some of dubstep's most important releases, including one of the first dubstep albums in Degenerate by Vex'd. Jamie Teasdale and Roly Porter are both native Londoners, who first met at college in Bristol. Their work as Vex'd is instantly identifiable. While much dubstep creates a sense of non-locatable unease, a Vex'd production simply smashes the door in and scares the wits out of you. Packing their tracks with as many toxic synth lines and timestamped ragga samples as it will hold, it breaks all the conventions of dubstep as a dancefloor genre.

Fitfully paced and jaggedly crafted, Degenerate's hour of non-stop mid-range assault is too irregular for all but the most hardy DJ, but certainly pretty exciting when taken on its own terms.

DJ Pinch also forms a part of the Bristol dubstep connection with his Subloaded night and Tectonic label, and his "Qawwali" was an idiosyncratic staple throughout 2006. Grafting tabla and harmonium samples and excerpts from Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan's Musst Musst album onto dubstep's rhythmic matrix, "Qawwali" is a simple but effortless translation from devotional bliss to dancefloor ecstasy.

Shackleton
Soundboy's Nuts Get Ground Up Proper EP
SKULL DISCO 12" 2006

Appleblim/Shackleton
Soundboy's Ashes Get Chopped Out And Snorted EP
SKULL DISCO 12" 2007

With their DIY-style covers, punk rock track titles and free party ethos, Skull Disco approach dubstep from an oblique angle. Yet the label, run by Londoner Shackleton and Bath resident Appleblim, is home to some of the most forward-looking music in dubstep. Originally part of the select bunch of ravers at FWD>>, the pair's route into production began when

a homemade Shackleton track found its way onto the free-spirited Mordant Music label, and the Skull Disco label followed soon after.

Rarely played by DJs, Skull Disco's stark deconstructions are virtual blueprints for the future possibilities of dubstep, with Shackleton's "Blood On My Hands" (from the Soundboy's Nuts Get Ground Up Proper EP) recently providing the raw materials for a minimal rework by Techno DJ Ricardo Villalobos. The original track eschews drum presets for dancing African percussion and is driven by an almost funereal sub-bass, creating a surreal union of Pole and The Mystic Revelation Of Rastafari. From their latest EP, Appleblim's "Vansan" is a superficially simple downtempo number, with a sober refrain and brushed steel textures, but an emotional charge is evident in the track's dreamy echo spaces. On the flipside, Shackleton's "You Bring Me Down" recalls nothing so much as Lee Perry's Black Ark years, with wonky percussion to the forefront and a lurking echo of a bassline, just out of the reach of the speakers. Paring down its core foundation, the bass, Shackleton excavates new, vacant spaces within the Id structures of Garage. These elastic, pliable reformations of dubstep suggest that the genre has finally evolved beyond rigid formulas, reaching towards a new, organic maturity. □

Charts Playlists from the outer limits

15 For Landing Back In London To

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Anlo Ewe Drummers
"Adzida" from Drums Of West Africa: Ritual Music Of Ghana (Lyrichord)

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John Cage
"Where Are We Going And What Are We Doing?" musical lecture 1960 (Private recording)

Christian Marclay & Otomo Yoshihide
"Derailment" from Moving Parts (Asphodel)

Beta Erko
"Otvoreh Za Site" from I'm OK You're OK (Quecksilber)

Lady Sovereign
"Public Warning" from Public Warning (Universal/Island)

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Frank Bretschneider
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"0°: zero degrees [1]" from 0°C (Touch)

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"King In My Empire" from W/The Artists (Burial Mix)

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"Soft Pedal Blues" from The Empress (CBS)

Pascal Diatta & Sona Mané
"Mesin Sedy" from Simnadé (Rogue)

Earth, Wind & Fire
"Happy Feeling" from That's The Way Of The World (Columbia/Legacy)

Compiled By Kaffe Matthews
www.annetteworks.com



Alphabet Soup 15

AMM
BDP
DAF
EL-P
EPMD
FFWD
Hoh
KLF
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MV + EE
OOIOO
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Compiled by The Trawler



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Churning Strides (Talitres)
Bevel
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Do Make Say Think
You You're A History In Rust (Constellation)
Lying Canyon
Lying Canyon (Soft Abuse)
Comets On Fire
Blue Cathedral (Sub Pop)
Shipping News
Three/Four (Quarterstick)
Loren Mazzacane Connors
Night Through: Singles And Collected Works 1976–2004 (Family Vineyard)
Blind Willie McTell
Statesboro Blues: The Early Years 1927–1935 (Document)
Pumice
Yeahnahvienna (Soft Abuse)
Various
Studio One Groups (Soul Jazz)
Xela
For Frosty Mornings And Summer Nights (Type)
Ne Zhdali
Whatever Happens, Twist! (Orkhestra)

Compiled by Millefeuille
www.mille-feuille.fr



The Office Ambience

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Wiley
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Anthony Braxton
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Strategy
Future Rock (Kranky)
Seefel
Quique (Too Pure)
Various
Silver Monk Time (Play Loud)
Andrew Pekler
Cue (Kranky)
Kassin + 2
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The Peter Brötzmann Chicago Tentet
Be Music Night (FMP)
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Black & White In Dub (Hot Pot)
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Compiled by The Wire Sound System

We welcome charts from record shops, radio shows, clubs, DJs, labels, musicians, readers, etc. Email charts@thewire.co.uk

SEBASTIEN AGNETTI

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Soundcheck This month's selected CDs and vinyl

Absorbing Björk's latest musical metamorphosis, David Stubbs finds an artist finally free of eccentricities

At home in the unknown: Björk



Björk

Volta

ONE LITTLE INDIAN CD

When Björk first emerged with The Sugarcubes, most were struck by her vocals – the way they splashed and vaulted over songform constraints, even the elastic and openended indie pop structures of The Sugarcubes. It was as if she had created new, high watermarks for female emotional expression in popular music, banishing the twee vibratos of yore and opening up huge, Northerly vistas of possibility.

As early as 1987, however, it became evident that Björk had pretty much rolled out her entire bag of vocal tricks and tropes – the little growls, the panther-like leaps, the arcing hysteria, the elfin whispers and precious naiveties. It seemed to some that with each outing she simply paraded these mannerisms in varying order, trading on an increasingly shopworn reputation for eccentricity. The lavishness of her backing arrangements, one began to suspect, were necessary to compensate for her over-familiar vocals, which were simply breaking the same old rules, over and over.

All of this may have been the case. However, since Vespertine, Björk has enjoyed something of an artistic renaissance. 2000's choral Medúlla was a magnificent metamorphosis, and Volta, arrayed in a equally sumptuous set of new musical robes, confirms that Björk has evolved from shrieking indie sensation into an international treasure, a queinely vortex where great things happen at her bidding and arrangement. This is another excellent album.

Björk certainly chooses her collaborators wisely. Timbaland guests on several tracks, while Congo's Konono No 1 contribute electric likembes, their singular metallic percussion, on opener "Earth Intruders". Brian Chippendale of Lightning Bolt and Mark Bell of LFO also add beats and textures, while Min Xiao-Fen ladles sensual trails of pipa across

"I See Who You Are". Antony Hegarty of Antony & The Johnsons exchanges verses with Björk on two tracks, almost conjuring images of showbiz singers cooing affectionately from adjacent stools, and yet it works. Ideas are cleverly borrowed, too. The brass interludes which punctuate tracks, like the exchanges of ship's steam horns – described in the notes as Björk's "brass concept", with Matt Robertson credited as the "facilitator of conceptual brass ideas" – are reminiscent of Alvin Curran's Maritime Rites.

However, Volta is much more than a tapestry woven from the talents of others. Although Björk's vocals are relatively downplayed in the mix, she is clearly controlling and shaping the direction of these tracks, forging something foreign and idiosyncratic but without a hint of kookiness. "Earth Intruders" establishes two of the key themes of Volta – evolution and difference. Driven by the remorseless Konono rhythms and discreet, muscular Techno, Björk stomps in, face painted, like an Army Of Her, bringing "necessary voodoo". There follows the first Curran-esque brass interlude, which evolves into a recurring feature of Volta. It's the perfect, melancholic accompaniment to "Wanderlust", a paean to Björk's unquenchable appetite for experimentation and change, where she forever moves from "island to island", with all the loneliness and rootlessness that implies. "I feel at home wherever the unknown surrounds me", she proclaims/laments. The brass recurs later on the stoical "Pneumonia", initially like the respiratory wheeze of a life support system, but gradually developing into a series of simple but affecting phrases, shifting gracefully up and down the registers.

"The Dull Flame Of Desire" is the first of her duets with Antony Hegarty, again conducted against a dour, assenting chorus of brass. The use of the word "dull" is the key to this highly affected, almost mock-Elizabethan verse – love as durable and permanent,

rather than lightning and fireworks. "Innocence" is another of the album's more solipsistic outings, with Björk contemplating the value of the fear that comes with maturity ("the thrill of fear/Now greatly enjoyed with courage") while Timbaland pumps out a disciplinary, sinewy backbeat.

"Vertebrae By Vertebrae" is dominated once more by brass like leaden skies, but here in a more cinematic mode, as Björk ascends to where the "air is thinner" to "set my clock on the moon", releasing in some lupine blast of artistic liberation the "same old cloud claustrophobic in me". "Hope", in which Mali musician Toumani Diabate's kora tumbles in like a spring breeze, feels like blessed relief, but this belies one of the album's more troubled lyrics, pondering whether it is better or worse if a female suicide bomber's pregnancy bump is fake or real. "Internal whirlwind, I have fostered since childhood" hisses Björk, like a mantra. "Declare Independence" reprises the combative militancy of "Earth Intruders", set amid a claustrophobic squirm of electronics and farting sparks, with Björk urging us to "raise your flag" against a mounting backbeat, as if hammering her fists against the inside of a telephone kiosk. This climactic moment is followed, incongruously, by "My Juvenile", another radiant duet with Hegarty, with Jonas Sen's clavichord's adding a golden, mock-courtly, Pre-Raphaelite glow to this rather staged yet deeply moving address to a young lover.

Björk's place in popular culture remains anomalous. It's irritating to see her being patted on the head at times – appearing on the BBC's Jonathan Ross show not so long ago, he presented her with a toy puffin as a present, for which he was lucky to escape without a sock on the jaw. However, she remains invaluable, not just a means of hosting new ideas and introducing them into the mainstream but as an increasingly self-aware and fully realised artist in her own right. □

A&E

O!

SONIG CD

Andrew Sharpley (once of Stock, Hausen & Walkman) and Emiko Ota comprise the play-power duo of A&E, and *O!*, their third album, sits carefully on the fence separating the wilfully goofy from the strangely charming. It's totally congruent with the world of their host imprint, Sonig, whose curatorial aesthetic is probably best described as 'serious fun'. To A&E's credit, they keep their balance for good portions of an album that floats easily between the focused and the giddily distracted, the wacky and the abstract.

Records like this bristle with successful and unsuccessful big ideas, but I found myself most enamoured of the unexpected asides that fit through *O!*: the stuttering voice repeatedly gargling the word "green" throughout the song of the same name, for example, or the snippet of a fireworks display, replete with cooing audience, that briefly flits through "Gion Kouta". This track is one of four here that recontextualises late 19th and early 20th century Japanese folk song, and while they're a little uncomfortable in performance, there's something endearing about the friction between genuine folk melodies and equally genuine wayward electronica.

Ota and Sharpley also detour through drum 'n' bass, Hawaiian exotica and, on the Luc Ferrari dedication "Jay", pensive abstraction, with Noël Akchoté ghosting on acoustic guitar. Such genre-trashing voraciousness recalls Van Dyke Parks's *Discover America* or Mike Cooper's aural travelogues. Like these artists, A&E play with the building blocks of nostalgic and winsome music with equal parts love, studiousness and irreverence.

JON DALE

Tetuzi Akiyama & Jozef Van Wissem

Hymn For A Fallen Angel

INCUNABULUM CD

Three years after their debut duo *Proletarian Drift* on the Dutch BVHaast label, Amsterdam based Baroque lutenist Jozef van Wissem and post-onkyo bluesman Tetuzi Akiyama deliver a more introspective sequel, complete with titles referencing William Blake, Aleister Crowley and Tennyson. The silver-on-black engraving cover art (familiar from other releases on van Wissem's Incunabulum imprint) comes from an 1882 edition of Tennyson, in a juxtaposition of contemporary Improv with Romantic poetry and Thelemic magic that van Wissem describes as a kind of dialogue between past and present, "investigating, analysing and ultimately criticising the now".

The earlier album was recorded live and mapped out a harmonic common ground – much of it unashamedly tonal – for the duo to build upon in a series of stately moves somewhere between chess and slow motion flamenco. *Hymn For A Fallen Angel* is an equally fine release, but here they collaborate through studio means rather than in real time. Van Wissem added his contributions 'blind' to recordings he had made two months earlier of Akiyama's Martin HD-28 guitar. As a result, the instruments don't so much seek each other out as come across each other from time to time, though there is often a vague sense of underlying beat, since van Wissem was able to

see Akiyama's notes coming up on a computer screen and synchronise with them – or not, as the case may be – and make strategic edits and overdubs.

Both performers experiment with microtonal nuances – van Wissem by subtle retuning of his 24 string instrument; Akiyama by time-honoured Country blues bottlenecking. The result is a strange and wonderful cross between Ry Cooder and Harry Partch, a delicate mix of cultures and colours, techniques and idioms old and new, all resonating in the deep natural reverb of the Dutchman's Baroque lute.

DAN WARBURTON

Alias

Collected Remixes

ANTICON CD

This collection of remixes by Nova Scotian producer, Anticon founder and sometime rapper Brendon Whitney, better known as Alias, highlights a problem inherent in many such albums. Namely, that however diverse the roster of remixees, the lingering taste is often one of sameness, that the artists asked for the 'Alias' stamp and got exactly that. Whitney seems to lack the nonchalant disregard for his paymasters that enabled Aphex Twin's *26 Mixes For Cash* to transcend its source material, and taken together, these 11 tracks leave one slightly jaded.

Some tracks at least provide promising raw material for Alias's style of dislocated vocals, edgy basslines and shifting veils of fuzz. Sixto's "Karmic Retribution/Funny Sticks" builds the dread, *Endroducing*-style, with descending violins and a melodramatic, speaker-sweeping theme, before Alias bursts through with splintering vocals and hi-hats. The rework of John Vanderslice's "Exodus Damage" is more problematic: whereas the guitar-strumming original balanced its soul-searching with a light musical touch, here the vocal inhabits an apocalyptic realm of portentous, crashing thuds and echoes. Lucky Pierre's "Crush" suffers a depressingly literal fate, the original's delicate tension of string and crackle shoved into the background by over-egged beats, as if banished to Hell's own triphop theme bar.

At least the Anticon stablemates fare somewhat better. Why?'s vocals on "Into The Trees" (from Themselves/Notwist's collaboration 13 & God) robustly hold their own against crisper, more discrete beats. Perhaps among friends Whitney felt less pressure to serve up the 'typical' Alias sound that somewhat dilutes the rest of the album.

ABI BLISS

Astral Social Club

#11

ASTRAL SOCIAL CLUB CD-R

#12

ASTRAL SOCIAL CLUB CD-R

Vibracathedral Orchestra founder Neil Campbell may have recently released an Astral Social Club 'greatest hits' package on the VHF label, but if you're keen on comprehensively trawling his most edifying project yet, you'll want to dig deep into the limited edition CD-R series he has been flinging out of his woodshed for the past two years. I'm not sure they represent a simplistic 'developmental' arc so much as a series of glancing, blurry

snapshots, this time including motion capture from live performances, and there's little as surreal as hearing 50 minutes of perfectly rendered freedom sound followed by a cheeky smattering of applause.

It's fairly easy to trace Campbell's influences, largely because he's so vocal about his love for early Kraftwerk, Cluster, Wolfgang Voigt and so on. What's harder to quantify is exactly how he absorbs their DNA into his own practice. On one level, there's a fascination with drones and electronics, and Campbell's fondness for ricocheting rhythms that move in and out of phase comes close at times to Voigt's M:I:5 recordings. But there's also something rumbling way below the surface, a love of the spectral qualities of circuitry perhaps, the cumulative effects of equipment left to do its own singing.

Typically, Campbell sets a handful of motifs or textures in motion, and what starts benign and wistful slowly changes its demeanour as it pushes into the red zones of the dB meter, the distortion adding grit and grind. It's a kind of 'meatball effect', with the sound steadily spiralling ever upwards before it takes off into an entirely other space. The result is positively ecstatic, evidenced most overwhelmingly by the huge swarms of multilayered noise that comprise the three closing tracks of #11.

JON DALE

The Bark Haze

Total Joke Era

IMPORTANT CD

The Bark Haze LP

IMPORTANT LP

The Bark Haze take their name from a mishearing of The Bar-Kays, the Stax R&B group who backed Otis Redding. It would be nice to think that the title *Total Joke Era* works the same way, but if it does, the reference is beyond me. Formed by Thurston Moore and Gown (aka Andrew MacGregor, a British-Columbian psych-folk enigma based in Massachusetts), with occasional drumming from Pete Nolan of Magik Markers, The Bark Haze, unsurprisingly, do not make uptempo horn-driven soul, but spontaneous, twin-guitar burnouts that blur the difference between noise and melody.

"Punchline 1" is an openended drift into delayed chords, ticklish harmonics and off-centre melodies. There's a constant undertow of chaos, but also a lyricism, dwelling on fragments of tune discovered along the way. "Punchline 2" is a more savage republic, with extensive collateral damage to strings that get in the way of hitting other strings. Broken chords collapse and collide before the set finally floats out on a simple peaceful pattern.

Although *The Bark Haze LP* could easily be mistaken for a vinyl pressing of *Total Joke Era*, it's a completely different set of recordings, altogether more gnarled, wayward and turbulent than its non-identical CD twin. Two of the three tracks are live, which probably explains the greater intensity. Gown and Moore burrow in and out of each other's contributions with real ferocity, and one track features the drumming of Pete Nolan. Like *Total Joke Era*, the album has a numinous sense of never-quite-becoming, of thoughts turning over in a raw unfiltered state before being properly articulated, a quality which can also be heard on Sonic Youth's SYR series. But

SYR isn't really a fair comparison: The Bark Haze have their own distinct vocabulary.

SAM DAVIES

Alexei Borisov & Anton Nikkilä

Where Are They Now

N&B RESEARCH DIGEST CD

From a listener's perspective, the same problems from 2004's *Typical Human Beings* dog this collaborative effort from Russian sonic agitator Alexei Borisov and his Finnish experimentalist counterpart Anton Nikkilä: the dichotomy between a compositional philosophy of detachment and the odd intrusion of not just blackly comic overtones but residual texts bottling up psychological snapshots from the grimy, paranoid times of the Soviet era.

The first track, "Specialized Literature On Microsurgery", set to a deconstructionist, slo-mo jazz beat, reads like a surrealist, automated blog entry. The translated sleeve notes to the glitching, Pan Sonic-like abstractions of "Léon Theremin" could have been a bullet point chronology of Thérémín's life interspersed with trivia from Wikipedia, but are in fact lifted from one of Borisov's lecture notes on the great instrumentalist. And what of the mysterious "Georg Kargl", drawing chunks of information from a memory bank and shuffling them together to make curious, nonsensical, chuckleworthy cut-ups?

All superbly absurdist, you might say. But the trick is in deciphering the Russian riddle, employed as a lingua franca, with non-speakers expected to decode the tortuous, intoning demands of the tongue, from the delirious to the deadpan. The stuttering free jazz drums, dinnin' tinkles and groaning sax of "Metaphysics Of Swing" might make the most 'sense' melodically, but laid out in this peculiar 'poetic' quadrant, nothing is what it seems.

RICHIE RUCHPAUL

Alessandro Bosetti

Her Name

CROUTON CD

Closely following his album documenting the speech of the mentally and physically handicapped, *Il Fiore Della Bocca*, Alessandro Bosetti's *Her Name* is the next step in a series of recordings that search for the musical and melodic DNA burnt deep into the spoken voice's patterns and cells. This time around, Bosetti traces a kind of travel map through vocal snippets recorded in Amsterdam, Baltimore, Berlin, Milano and Sangha.

Much has been made of Bosetti's recourse to 'the song' on *Her Name*, but that feels like a red herring, particularly as many artists from his particular field (Giuseppe Ielasi, Christof Kurzmann) have dabbled with song form on recent recordings. When successful, these experiments are sumptuous and unpredictable; when not, they trail off into dilettantish inconsequentiality. Bosetti straddles that divide uneasily, and *Her Name* sometimes feels like a set of interesting ideas, rather than an engaging audio document.

Her Name starts shaky, but picks up steam halfway through with "Ivory Coast", where Morten J Olsen's percussion creates a sparkling backdrop for Bosetti's voice (here shadowing an original recording) and sharply plucked guitar. Bosetti crafts instrumental melodies around the speech samples, which

Various

Mute Audio Documents 1978–1984

MUTE 10xCD

'Label mystique' is a strange business. Compare their respective ledgers and it's clear that the Mute label's output of great music easily surpasses that of Factory. Furthermore, the latter sputtered into oblivion many years ago, whereas Mute prospers to this day (no longer exactly independent, having plighted its troth to EMI in 2002, but very much still a creatively autonomous operation). There's no doubt, though, which of the two labels has the higher profile in terms of rock historiography and cult appeal. It was Factory's aura and Anthony H Wilson's charisma that sustained the film *24 Hour Party People*, but you can't imagine a director embarking on a movie of the Mute Story. Daniel Miller has always maintained a low profile, and the label he founded in 1978 – initially as a DIY outlet for his music as The Normal – still has the aura of a stealth operation.

The company has maintained a steady course over nearly three decades, embracing trends only where they have an organic affinity with its founding principles – basically Europhile and anti-rock 'n' roll – as when the label started its Techno imprint Novamute in the early 90s. Mute still adheres to post-punk's ethos of experimentation and its aesthetic of modernist austerity: its very name is stark and sleek, paralleling the four-letter economy and blank impersonality of Wire (one of Miller's fave groups and, in their 80s reincarnation, a Mute act). Miller continues to support elder statesmen of post-punk such as Throbbing Gristle and Nick Cave. The label even began curating, via its Grey Area division, the output of Cabaret Voltaire, Swell Maps, and Throbbing Gristle well before the era became a fashionable and profitable concern for the retro industry.

Twinned concerns of futurism and history inform *Mute Audio Documents*, a gargantuan box set containing every single and EP released by the label from its inception through to 1984. Like most boxes, it's a curious object, not so much an entity to be listened to in its entirety as a resource, a reference

work (as the matter-of-fact title *Audio Documents* hints). Each double disc – there are five altogether – is indexed to a particular year, the exceptions being the first, which covers the label's first four years, and the last, which corrals various rarities. This approach preserves some of the haphazardness of a fledgling label's output. Early Depeche Mode at their most jejune and jingly collide with the grating abstraction of Boyd Rice; Yazoo rub up against Liaisons Dangereuses; most incongruously, The Birthday Party's fetid and febrile swansong EP *Mutiny* is preceded by the The Assembly, a cloyingly saccharine collaboration between former Depeche Mode member Vince Clarke and ex-Undertone Feargal Sharkey.

Committed to comprehensiveness, *Audio Documents* presents lesser outfits (I Start Counting, anybody?) on an equal footing with visionaries like Einstürzende Neubauten. But this non-judgmental approach has its advantages, salvaging many skewed gems and charming oddities. Did you know that Smegma put out a split single (with Non) via Mute, the "Mother Sky" homage of "Flashcards"? Miller has been relentless in his support of Wire, and Bruce Gilbert appears solo with the rattling metallic sound-contraption "U, Mu, U" and also alongside Graham Lewis and Miller himself in Duet Embo, whose synth-psalm "Or So It Seems" is almost nine minutes of exquisite sorrow. The fifth rarities set is variable, with the considerable plus factor of the hard-to-find The Normal and Robert Rental EP *Live At West Runton Pavilion* offset by the cosmic inessentialness of five live Yazoo tracks.

In some ways the archetypal Mute artist was Fad Gadget (aka Frank Tovey), a performance artist turned electro popster who emerged, like Marc Almond, from the art department of Leeds Polytechnic. The copious amount of Fad Gadget material here reveals Tovey as an underrated electronic musician, ranging from the baleful "Back To Nature", with its imagery of "burning bodies in the sun... just like lemmings, everyone", to the outright Gothtronica of "Ricky's Hand", where Tovey sounds like an exact hybrid of Gary Numan and Peter Murphy, and its clangy dubversion

"Hand Shake". Tovey remained a mascot artist for Mute right up until his death (which in freaky symbolism coincided almost exactly with Mute selling itself to EMI).

As much as Mute is a home for artistic extremists (verging on an arts council subsidised by the global sales of Depeche Mode and, shudder, Erasure), the label warrants admiration for the way it has walked the line between mainstream and vanguard. DAF exemplify that spirit, here caught at a transitional moment with the punk-funk guitars and proto-Techno synthbass of 1980's "Tanz Mit Mir" and its perverted nursery rhyme flipside "Der Räuber Und Der Prinz", which anticipates the hardbody Eurodisco which made them pop stars in Germany. DAF offshoot Liaisons Dangereuses feature with the slinky 'n' sinister "Mystere Dans Le Bouillard" and "Los Ninos Del Parque", a hallucinatory dance track with its Doppler effect synth-smears and pixie-like yelps gleefully darting out of crannies in the mix.

Mute's greatest art-into-pop group, though, was Depeche Mode. When Vince Clarke quit, most assumed that without his musical nous the Basildon boys would fade away. Instead, Clarke became a culture criminal churning out melodic inanity on a vast scale with Erasure, and it was the left-behind Depeche who grew as artists, evolving from the tremulous poignancy of "Leave In Silence" and mature moroseness of "Get The Balance Right" to the 'Gang Of Four with synths' of "Everything Counts" and "Love In Itself". The metal-bashing "Master And Servant" was Neubauten-goes-pop, while "Blasphemous Rumours" is simply an achingly beautiful, exquisitely intricate piece of electronica.

Mute's knack of bridging out-there experiment and in-here pop attraction was present right from the start, with Miller flitting between two musical alter egos: The Normal, for the Ballard-inspired and Cronenberg-anticipating "Warm Leatherette"/"TVOD", and The Silicon Teens, for shiny synthesized covers of rock 'n' roll classics like Chuck Berry's "Memphis Tennessee". Mute's current roster, stretching from Goldfrapp to Grinderman, shows that this agility endures. Get the balance right indeed. □

Kebab dreams: DAF

In a trawl through the audio archives of Mute Records, Simon Reynolds finds art into pop does go



lends the guitar playing, in particular, a spikiness that's close to The Red Krayola's aleatory songs on *Kangaroo*; it also reflects another album which morphs spoken verse into abstract melodic designs, Basil Kirchin's *Particles*. "Idiot" closes with a beautiful couple of minutes of sweet harmonies and woozy grooves, the most successful moment on a questing, yet sporadically awkward album.

JON DALE

Anthony Braxton

9 Compositions (Iridium) 2006

FIREHOUSE 12 9xCD+DVD

Anthony Braxton's concept of 'Ghost Trance Music' has governed the evolution of his music since the mid-90s. Described as "the point of definition in my work thus far", this Herculean nine CD set documents what he says will be the last instalments of his Ghost Trance Music pieces. In some ways it's disappointing that he needs to slap a definitive label on this music – tracking the increasing conceptual lucidity of the works through other releases on Leo, Victo and Delmark has been a liberating learning curve, and at least as important as the final result itself. But who's going to blame Braxton for taking pride in these brilliant interpretations by an ensemble of New York's finest young creative musicians? Not me.

The Iridium Jazz Club sits in the heart of New York's Times Square, and that musical innovation can still find a place within Manhattan's tourist hotspot is reassuring. As Braxton explains in the accompanying DVD documentary, Ghost Trance Music borrows its name from Native American Ghost Dance rituals of the late 19th century. The DVD concludes with an inspiring filmed performance of *Composition No 358*, where the musicians grapple with left brain/right brain conflicts of simultaneously reading notation, randomly juxtaposing material and attempting to improvise. The music's trajectory from the 19th century to the present day seems to Braxtonise the entire history of jazz (Fletcher Henderson, Ellington, Mingus) and American music (Ives to Cage) within a single vision.

Players are essentially given three sorts of material to play – and to play with. A 'primary melody' is the starting point, and these are usually defined by specifically bop-like contours that make use of quicksilver rhythmic momentum, stretching instrumental registers like a Dali watch. 'Secondary' pages break the ensemble into satellite sub-groupings and slot into the flow at any point during the performance. A wild card – 'tertiary material' – can be pilfered from elsewhere in the Braxton canon and spliced into the patchwork. Compositional control and improvisational licence are kept in exhilarating mediation – musicians need to listen vigilantly to keep the composition moving, judging the consequences of what they're about to do before they act.

It could be argued – not without justification – that this set-up inevitably leads to a similar feel of loosely defined 'busyness' throughout each piece. But the flipside is that Braxton achieves an ensemble music assembled from a collective of powerful individual voices. Trumpeter Taylor Ho Bynum is an intense lead presence, and the sound of Braxton locking into a section with the other saxophonists (James Fei, Andrew Raffo Dewar, Stephen

Lehman) is thrilling. As the texture thins out, more clandestine layers emerge. Violin-violist Jessica Pavone and bassoonist Sara Schoenbeck trash archetypal jazz instrumental colourings, while musicians add their own grunts and vocalisations to the overall texture. Braxton evokes the model of "tracks, like a giant choo-choo train system" as a symbol of how the music operates, and there's a droll in-joke during the first piece as the brass imitate Ellingtonian train sounds. A major CD event for sure, and an impressive introductory venture for this new record company.

PHILIP CLARK

Kria Brekkan & Avey Tare

Pullhair Rubeye

PAW TRACKS CD

This honeymoon effort from newlyweds Avey Tare (Animal Collective) and Kria Brekkan (Kristin Anna Valtýsdóttir, formerly of Múm) shares recognisable musical genes with the kaleidoscopic wonderland of fellow AC member Panda Bear's *Person Pitch*. However, it points the looking glass in an altogether different direction. Literally so, as while holed up in a snowy New York last Christmas with the tapes of their songs, the duo decided to see how they sounded played backwards. The result, after a little manipulation and speeding up, is *Pullhair Rubeye*.

Putting aside any howls of consternation from Animal Collective fans, Tare's insistence that the reversal is not merely a ploy to defeat filesharers, and the fact that 'forward' versions of the album are already circulating (revealing an album of pretty, if spindly pop songs), *Pullhair Rubeye* is appealingly disconcerting. Running backwards, the guitars and piano take on an extra layer of muted warmth; the music thrums with a soft beat, free from rhythmic over-familiarity. "Palenka" and "Foetus No-Man" become jittery, accelerated instrumentals, but it's the vocal tracks that intrigue the most, as Brekkan's childish, eerie whisper and Tare's more earthy tones twist around sudden swells in pitch and volume. In this form, the lyrics may be unintelligible to all but the most dedicated 'Paul is dead' conspiracy theorist, but "Opis Helpus" comes across as vulnerable and awkward, while the syllables of "Lay Lay Off, Faselam" sound surprisingly pugnacious.

Whether intended as pure whimsy, a knowing joke or a genuine exercise in sonic abstraction, *Pullhair Rubeye* is a playful half hour spent in a world where many dabble but few are brave or foolish enough to immerse themselves. No doubt normal service will resume soon.

ABI BLISS

Bruise

We Packed Are Bags

FOGHORN CD

Bruise's last CD documented the final British concert by their guest, guitarist Derek Bailey. *We Packed Are Bags* is the quintet alone, and that's plenty. These three tracks were recorded direct to DAT at the 291 Gallery and the Red Rose in London during 2005. Tony Bevan, playing tenor as well as bass saxophone here, has a strident, brawny manner but Bruise work as a group and Bevan fits in convincingly, despite his forcefulness. Admittedly the roomy acoustic of these venues, especially on the

opening "Big Paws", helps meld the quintet into a unit – to the detriment of local detail – but it's equally a matter of well judged internal balance and dynamics.

Percussionist Orphy Robinson, making great use of steel drum, John Edwards on double bass, Mark Sanders kit drumming and Spring Heel Jack's Ashley Wales infusing electronics and atmospheres stretch out collectively and steer a mood or work through a ragged groove. Internal conversations take place in shifting alignments that keep the music's focus moving. It's a sort of Ambient free jazz, sometimes brooding, sometimes agitated, sometimes a curious mix of both states. The hollow acoustic is a drawback, introducing a degree of unwelcome distance into the listening as well as some indistinctness.

It's in the nature of such music that it occasionally drifts as it finds its direction. When found, as in the closing minutes of the long second track, "Long Face", where Bevan burns slowly over a steadily smouldering backdrop, the outcome is memorable.

JULIAN COWLEY

Cornelius Cardew

Consciously

MUSICNOW CD

"There is only one road for the composer to play a progressive role in the class struggle," Cornelius Cardew proclaimed in 1978, "to break out of the bourgeois cultural establishment and go amongst the working people." The phrase "go amongst" has a distinct air of missionary zeal and self-righteousness and most of the revolutionary songs collected on *Consciously* sound horribly stiff and preacherly. Cardew is credited as the pivotal figure but he is one among many in The People's Liberation Music, The PCA Band and others contributing to a historically interesting, musically dismal release.

Musicians include Evan Parker, Keith Rowe, Gong drummer Pip Pyle, pianist Dave Smith and composer Hugh Shrapnel. There's a version of Brecht and Eisler's "Solidarity Song", connecting with a conspicuously successful precedent, but mostly these are leaden tunes with crudely rhetorical lyrics that have built-in remoteness from the situations they seek to address. Reggae and folk are commandeered for the cause, but the crucial ingredients that make popular music work are routinely overlooked in these well-intentioned but lame songs. Mostly they sound like hymns, sung with self-regarding piety.

Of course Cardew's outrage at injustice and oppression and his readiness to get involved were admirable responses. But there's a patronising detachment and politeness in this proselytising that's all the more glaring in light of punk and post-punk energy release. Listen instead to Dick Gaughan's *True And Bold: Songs Of The Scottish Miners*, where an indignant man expresses shared humanity through music worthy of the issues.

JULIAN COWLEY

Rhys Chatham

A Crimson Grail

TABLE OF THE ELEMENTS CD

Subtitled "For 400 Electric Guitars", *A Crimson Trail*, commissioned by the city of Paris, is American born, France based Chatham's most expansive work to date and as far as the genre

of electric guitar music goes, probably unrivalled. For this performance at Paris's Sacré Coeur cathedral in October 2005, Chatham assembled 400 players of varying degrees of ability but unanimous in their perseverance and enthusiasm. Led by 'section leaders' taking their cues by headphone from Chatham himself, they played before an enthusiastic audience outside the cathedral and then a more hushed and respectful one inside, with the performance broadcast on TV.

All of this alone recommends *A Crimson Grail*. One admires the audacity, the symphonic grandeur, the musical cooperation, the sublimation of egos, particularly when it comes to that most priapic and exhibitionist of instruments, the electric guitar. Unfortunately, *A Crimson Grail's* three pieces don't always live up to those expectations. The first piece oscillates, ebbs and flows, and initially induces the sort of heavenly surge intended by the composer. But its motions are not terrifically complex, and it fails to live up to its initial promise, relying too much on the unity of the players and the acoustics of the live environment. The second piece is subtler but a little ticking and ponderous. Only with the third piece does it live up to its monumental aspirations; static and cumulative in the manner of Phill Niblock, as if mass levitation of both players and audience is imminent. This would probably have been a great event to have witnessed and to have been involved in – ironically enough, it's also a good CD introductory point for those new to Chatham.

DAVID STUBBS

Colleen

Les Ondes Silencieuses

LEAF LABEL CD

Parisian cellist Colleen's beautifully tranquil third album is a paean to a naked Renaissance sound that exists in its own eerie space, seemingly untouched by any modern technology. Its focus on real instruments, notably the 16th century viola da gamba and the spinet, is just what you would expect from her. Each consecutive release has gradually loosened its hold on any electronic influence evidenced on her delicate 2003 debut *Everyone Alive Wants Answers* and inched further and further back to another time.

Walk in unawares on the opening "This Place In Time" with its intertwining melancholy strands of viol, you'd be forgiven for thinking it was a piece by Elizabethan composer John Dowland, a key influence. This neo-Renaissance approach permeates the album, even if, as on the title track, the escalating drama and intensity bring a more modern emotive pang to the proceedings.

The title itself, *Les Ondes Silencieuses*, is open to interpretation. 'Ondes' can mean 'still waters' as well as 'waves' (as in sound waves), but is also used to express the infrasonic warning made by earthquakes that can only be heard by the animal world. Nowhere is this impressionistic notion better represented than on the subtly experimental "Echoes And Coral", where crystal glasses softly resonate with supernatural dissonance.

Any feeling that, aside from the closing, more upbeat "Le Bateau", the pace might be a little sluggish in places is redeemed by the pure magic of tracks such as the supremely soothing "Sea Of Tranquillity", where clarinet



Travelling back in time to the first stirrings of Afro-electric fusion with Sly & The Family Stone, David Toop seeks the obscure source of the funk

Riot of colour: Sly (third left) & The Family Stone

Sly & The Family Stone A Whole New Thing

EPIC/LEGACY CD

Dance To The Music

EPIC/LEGACY CD

Life

EPIC/LEGACY CD

Stand!

EPIC/LEGACY CD

There's A Riot Goin' On

EPIC/LEGACY CD

Fresh

EPIC/LEGACY CD

Time is the way to enter; in search of lost time, the articulation of time, and all senses of evaded, projected, wasted and poorly observed time. Time, as Sly Stone once sung-said, needs another minute, at least. Bobby Womack, high on hits but barely able to stand, found himself caught in the labyrinth of Sly's devious philosophy, almost persuaded to stay away from his own gig. By this point a veteran of this self-destructive tactic of no-show, Sly told him, "It's not the time, it's the timing."

Passing time obsesses Sly, both in music and philosophy: babies making babies, in time you'll need a babysitter, time is here to stay, and Sly himself, gurgling and squealing in a cot of his own construction, low on Tuinals, Seconal, Placidyls, PCP, probably using cocaine just to bring himself up to a basic level of functionality: "Just like a baby, everything is new." In Joel Selvin's book, *Sly & The Family Stone: An Oral History*, Epic A&R man Stephen Paley recalls being ordered to book a San Francisco recording studio for Sly at 8am on a Saturday – not an easy task – then finding him asleep on the console three hours later, \$300 an hour, engineers sitting around twiddling thumbs: time.

What is impossible with this collection is to listen sequentially, track by track, and make sense of anything: myth, legend, reputation, decline, music history, whatever. Having grown up with most this music, I go back to certain songs or intros repeatedly, mystified and entranced by their otherworldly brilliance. Other tracks feel like remarkable musicians just jamming on a chord, too much but not enough,

nodding, keeping on keeping on. Within the funk jams and the strange songs, a state of nervous excitation twitches its path through time, no matter how drugged down-and-out the groove. At the time this musical interlocking was surely as addictive as coke, each player one key on a keyboard: jabs and tics, reflexes pulsing and flicking, a microscopic examination of time that circles inertia. Maybe the listener looks at his watch, hoping for an ending, but out of this under-regarded Afro-electric minimalism came segmented funk like *On The Corner* by Miles Davis, *Head Hunters* by Herbie Hancock, and much later, a whole lot of Prince, both heavenly and hellish.

From the first four albums, 1967 to 1969, there are key tracks – "Dance To The Music", "I Want To Take You Higher", "Stand!", "Sing A Simple Song", "Everyday People" – alongside a lot of original ideas that don't quite persuade you to fall in love. Smart, brash, crafty and crafted records, they crossed the colour divide of the late 1960s, and if you ever watch Woodstock you'll appreciate how alien it was to lead a mixed race, mixed gender group at that time, and how effectively Sly & The Family Stone could manipulate a bunch of hippies who thought they were immune to coercion and above showbiz. Perhaps Richard Nixon was watching.

Some faint memory sticks in my mind – a story about a house owned by John Phillips of The Mamas & The Papas, walls streaked with blood squirted from the needles that had become the core of his life. In 1971, Sly moved into the Bel Air mansion once owned by John and Michelle Phillips, padded the existing studio for a completely dry acoustic, embarked on marathon recording sessions until comatose. Mostly he played all the parts, dubbing over a preset drum machine, probably a Rhythm Ace. Maybe this was the first moment when the concept of group became anachronistic.

The house was full of drugs, guns, dangerous dogs and some equally dangerous musicians: Bobby Womack, Ike Turner, Billy Preston, Jimmy Ford. As with Brian Wilson's Smile, parts for *There's A Riot Goin' On* were discarded, moved around, divided between two players (Sly playing half a keyboard line, Billy Preston the other) until nobody knew who

was who. In the middle was Sly, so close to the microphone that at times the desk overloads. Distortion was always a major part of the Sly & The Family Stone sound, and it's wonderful to hear an expensive album breaking up in this way.

Vocals drift in on aether, telephone filtered or rich in breath and low throat, nasal, falsetto, deep bass, screeches, moans, slurs, multiplied to a confusion of inner tongues, fragments of the so-called self, often within the space of a bar, Sly singing without restraint, floating on a drone, "Just Like A Baby", everything new. This is the good part about doing so many drugs. Then there's the irresistible "Family Affair": bass, rhythm box, simple drums, electric piano, guitar solo, backing vocals, Sly leaning in close to your ear, confiding, warm and friendly. Track six, the title track, is silent for four seconds, which makes you wonder if Sly, whose first song on his first album began with a quote from "Frère Jacques", had caught some glimmer of John Cage.

What's great about this album would take a book, but among many qualities I can list the utterly original approach to mixing, song structure and arranging, delirious hooks and unhinged vocals singing lyrics so blankly ordinary as to be hermetic, sounds of wah-wah pedal hiss, the sense of all the pieces in disarray yet connected unbreakably by tensile threads that are nothing to do with musicians together in a room. Not of real time or social exchange, the source of the funk emanates from something altogether more obscure.

And back in time to "In Time", which opens the mostly exultant 1973 album, *Fresh*. Sly tried any number of drummers until Andy Newmark got it, dubbing his part onto an otherwise finished track with women dancing in front of him just to keep everything in the pocket. With the Rhythm Ace in the mix at the top of the song the beat sounds straightforward, but when the verse kicks in and the drum box is covered by bass, horns and keyboards, the floor drops into the basement. It's a remarkable moment, one of many. After this, the story goes bad in the worst way, but once a person has been simultaneously so far in time and out of time, their time is up. □

and plucked strings create a rich tangled texture. A softly shimmering mirage of an album, it not only transports the listener, it also mirrors a journey Colleen herself has taken – a journey that has finally brought her home.

SUSANNA GLASER

Rhodri Davies & Ko Ishikawa Compositions For Harp And Sho

HIBARI CD

In recent years, harpist Rhodri Davies has gone beyond cutting edge free improvisation with the likes of Cranc and The Sealed Knot to a place where he can now play works by composers such as James Saunders, Michael Parsons, Carole Finer and Fluxus artist Yasunao Tone. He's partnered here by Ko Ishikawa who, since 1987, has played the sho (a Japanese bamboo mouth organ) with the gagaku ensemble Reigakusha.

This collection begins with guitarist Taku Sugimoto's *Aka To Ao*, which consists of single notes from the sho of irregular duration, interspersed with varying measures of silence, accompanied by Davies playing with an E-bowed harp an octave below. The notes only rarely coincide, and 18 minutes of this relentless austerity may be too much for some listeners, but it allows you to focus on timbre, the nuances of note placement and the role of silence in a way that few other musics do.

Saxophonist Masahiko Okura's *Torso* could hardly fail to be more varied. The sho's broken chords and single notes are complemented by a rich range of articulations and sonorities from Davies. In its quietly unconfrontational way, it's something of a masterpiece.

The two remaining pieces could hardly be more dissimilar. Antoine Beuger's *Three Drops Of Rain/East Wind/Ocean* foregrounds a sporadic melody from the harp supported by sho chords, all played at the level of a whisper, whereas Toshiya Tsunoda's *Strings And Pipes Of The Same Length Float On Waves* is a noisy, sinewave accentuated, percussive/pulsative workout. While there initially seems to be a certain sameness to the first three pieces of this set, subsequent listens demonstrate what a strong and varied programme this is.

BRIAN MARLEY

Christopher DeLaurenti Favorite Interruptions

GD STEREO CD

Favorite Interruptions could prove a cult hit among the classical crowd. Seattle based Christopher DeLaurenti's album is a high-concept masterstroke by a guerrilla phonographer – six unedited recordings of the sounds that occur during concert intermissions. "Holst, Hitherto" starts with a dainty trio of glockenspiel, celeste and tympani warming up. It's interrupted by a languid French horn fanfare and a fluttering clarinet. Finally a sociable stranger asks, "Don't you wish you were up there playing something?"

Part of the fascination is that this is orchestral music that genuinely doesn't care whether you are paying attention. In fact, the listener's lack of focus is its basis – if the flautist thought you were alert, she wouldn't play like that. The musicians sound like a copse full of birds, all individual voices with no intention to blend. As with Peter Cusack's collection *Your Favourite London Sounds*, the psychological associations of the tones are

soothing. In a concert intermission you are at your most relaxed, loosened by alcohol and drowsy with pleasurable anticipation.

Each intermission has its own character. "Before Petrushka" is full of jittery piano, piccolo and accordion. "SF Variations" is a dense quartet of worried flutes. "Holding Out For Ein Helden" is a busy panorama, everyone up on stage and working hard. Overall the woodwind seem keenest to practise; for percussionists, unlikely to have a marimba or tympani at home, this may be their only chance. Beautifully presented in a parody of a Deutsche Grammophon sleeve, DeLaurenti has created a provocative and incidentally illegal (due to union rules) record. His sleeve essay offers several justifications, of which the best is "I adore listening". Why else go to concerts?

CLIVE BELL

Michel Doneda/Giuseppe Ielasi/ Ingar Zach

Flore De Cataclysmo

SEDIMENTAL CD

Improvisation often short-circuits itself due to the predictability of its line-ups. Usually drawing from the same circle of friends or documenting unending permutations of the same scene, yet presenting them as ad hoc, 'unpredictable' meetings, you can often get a good grip on a trio or quartet recording before hitting play on the machine. Which is why *Flore De Cataclysmo*, with its surprising line-up of Michel Doneda (saxophones), Giuseppe Ielasi (guitar and electronics) and Ingar Zach (drums and percussion) wins out: it may be many things, but predictable isn't one of them.

As a longstanding fan of Ielasi, I was intrigued to see how he would approach this 2004 trio meeting. If he initially appears the least outwardly confident of the players, with Doneda and Zach markedly more prominent, Ielasi is soon revealed as the 'near-absent' centre who anchors the session. His electronics function by insinuation, providing a mattress of sonic information over which Doneda and Zach explore the rich palette of wind and skin. Call it 'not always extended technique', if you will, and it may be all the better for it.

Ielasi's guitar sometimes reverts to simple clangs in somewhat apposite fashion, providing muted punctuation to Zach's and Doneda's richly spoken interplay. There are tiny moments of specific pleasure: Doneda's rich purr coasting over Zach's cymbals and crotales; a lovely moment midway through "Run Fingers Over Turquoise" where bowed metalics meet with sighing drones from Doneda and the omniscient rumble of electronics. But the entirety of *Flore De Cataclysmo* is gorgeous.

JON DALE

Earth

Hibernaculum

SOUTHERN LORD CD+DVD

The second release from the rejuvenated, Country-fried incarnation of original sludge rockers Earth is similar in spirit to its predecessor, 2006's *Hex, Or Printing In The Infernal Method*. Earth here are centred around Dylan Carlson's guitar and Adrienne Davies's drums, augmented by piano, organ, trombone and occasional bass from Sunn O))) co-leader and Southern Lord label head Greg

Anderson. "A Plague Of Angels", previously available on a tour-only 12", spans nearly half of the EP's 35 minutes, and the first three tracks are reworkings of old album cuts.

Carlson's simple riffs work just as well in a twanging Ry Cooder style as they do under waves of amp-frying sludge, a shift in direction which has retained the support of the doom-loving masses. The next Earth CD is rumoured to feature Bill Frisell, which could either be startling or the patience-tester of all time.

The DVD that makes up the second half of this package is certainly something of an endurance test, however. A document of the band's post-*Hex* European tour, it offers interview footage – Carlson speaks faster than he plays, but not by much – some performance clips and lots of highways seen through rain-streaked windshields. The documentary reflects the music it depicts – a long journey to a melancholy destination – but inertia gives the journey a magnetic pull and eventually something between resignation and fascination sets in.

PHIL FREEMAN

Eleh

Floating Frequencies/Intuitive
Synthesis I

IMPORTANT LP

Eleh use a battery of analogue oscillators to dig down into frequencies so low that they become their own obstacle; the technical difficulties of mastering and pressing them satisfactorily have delayed the release of *Floating Frequencies/Intuitive Synthesis I*. Beautifully packaged and pressed in a limited run, this record could have been a Stereolab-style exercise in fetishisation and nostalgia. It's dedicated to La Monte Young, and the album's titles, instruments and methodologies hark back to the academic laboratory conditions of 1960s minimalism. But its forensic exploration of the limits of bass perception (and reproduction) has uncannily contemporary echoes. "In The Ear Of The Gods" drops immediately into a speaker-threatening sub-bass stasis and stays there with immaculate purity, broken only by a raindrop of a kick-drum. When the unified bass tones finally shift fractionally, the resulting phasing has the kind of richly vertiginous wobble and warp that dubstep loves to play with. The subterranean ripples of tone and the glacial pace at which they unfold call to mind Earth and Sunn O)))'s mute explorations of the dark dynamics of depth when extracted from rock's edges.

The following two pieces are even more stripped down, but in this case less is unfortunately not more. Both "Piece For 2 Guitars And 4 Oscillators" and "Piece For Guitar And 4 Oscillators" are so unwaveringly monolithic you start skipping around to see if there's anything more than the barest whisper of tonal shift. The forthcoming *Vol II* might tip the balance back towards the mysterious harmonic effects which result when massive sonic presences become overshadowed by the little gaps between them.

SAM DAVIES

Satoko Fujii & Natsuki Tamura In Krakow In November

NOTTWO CD

With 35 albums as leader or co-leader, avant jazz pianist Satoko Fujii's originality can

often get submerged in her prolific output. An eclectic, open eared conceptualist and fertile player in group situations, this is the third duo album she has produced with her husband, trumpeter Natsuki Tamura. For most fans, the compositions will be familiar – all have appeared on other ensemble recordings by the pair. Here, however, they achieve new heights of expression.

The opener, "Strange Village" was the title track of the debut album of Tamura's Euro-folk group Gato Libre. While their music, all written by Tamura, sometimes tends towards folksy tweeness (with Fujii on accordion, thereby losing her explosive pianism) this duo interpretation distills its beauty. Melody and introspection are the key to *In Krakow In November*, contrasting with the Fujii Quartet's seismic *When We Were There* from last year, which featured Mark Dresser and Jim Black.

The title track creates a haunting East European mood, with the melancholy power of Tamura's playing reminiscent of Miles Davis on *Lift To The Scaffold*. "Morning Mist" is another Gato Libre piece, which here achieves a rapt impressionism. The album closes with "Inori", luminous and reflective. Fujii's standards are high, but there's something about this album's affecting intensity that puts it in the category of her very finest recordings.

ANDY HAMILTON

Carlos Giffoni & Prurient Heavy Rain Returns

IDEAL CD

Recorded in Bushwick, New York, *Heavy Rain Returns* documents two long, bruising (and bruised) improvisations on themes summoned from the depths of power electronics hell. Both tracks are collaborative encounters between noise scene nodes Carlos Giffoni and Prurient (aka Dominick Fernow, who also runs the Hospital Productions label and shop). Fernow's vocalisations on the first piece set the tone – all ragged metal edges, as though ripped from another record against their will. The track's initial layers of mosquito-like pulse and buzz are relatively serene, but the vocals herald a thickening and darkening of the music.

Giffoni and Fernow's feedback and circuit-bending mutate and modulate through a toxic, suffocating set, with each new attack seeking harsher textures. The pair generate a spectrum of distortion that spans eerie shortwave shrieks and colossal lava-like grumbling, the movement between these extremes constituting one of the set's key fascinations. At times Fernow's vocals disappear into the firestorm of textures around them, but when they are audible, their sandblasted desperation shows that the human voice in extremis can be more disturbing and affecting than the most extreme casualty ward circuit abuse.

SAM DAVIES

Githead

Art Pop

SWIM CD

To paraphrase the title of the iconic collage with which Richard Hamilton ushered in the era of Pop Art: just what is it that makes *Art Pop* – the second album from Githead – so different, so appealing? For this is a bewitching record, filled with conceptual and musical elegance, from an ensemble who comprise something of an avant rock

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supergroup. The potential of this deft quartet – Colin Newman of Wire, Malka Spigel and Max Franken of Minimal Compact, with Robin Rimbaud (aka Scanner) on guitars and ‘atmospheres’ – was obvious in their formative performances in 2004, where they played with lowering, edgy poise. On *Art Pop*, however, the project has discovered its true stylistic signature.

Art Pop succeeds through a bravura resolution of moods. Simultaneously brooding, lush, aggressive and lyrical, this is a reclamation of pop and rock music at their most atmospheric and beguiling. Moments recall Wire at their more playful; others suggest the mesmeric guitar density of Swami label-fellows, Silo. Carefully filleted tracts of choppy punk are overlaid with the delicate vocal intonations of Spigel or Newman. Encircling the whole is a softer pop feel, never too far from a mood of repose. At once taut and gracefully rolling, crammed with postmodern elegance and infectiously naturalistic rock melody, Githead walk/dance a dizzying tightrope between Art and Pop.

MICHAEL BRACEWELL

Goldie presents Rufuge Kru

Malice In Wonderland

METALHEADZ CD

Malice In Wonderland is a strangely out-of-time release: although it was recorded in the last year or so, the album sounds like some lost artefact from the mid-90s. As it turns out, this is no bad thing. Rufuge Kru made their name – and that of their leader, Goldie – with the 1992 Jungle classic, “Terminator”. *Malice In Wonderland* recalls the sleeker and moodier sound Rufuge Kru established on later tracks such as “Manslaughter” and “Fury”, tense but exhilarating confessions of stalking bass, ominous vocal samples and electronics that swarmed like Ecstasy rushes or brooded like a Monday morning comedown. While Goldie’s solo recordings became increasingly prone to jazz funk noodling, Rufuge Kru releases remained unapologetically machinic.

It is gratifying, then, that Goldie has not revived the Rufuge Kru brand at this late stage only to compromise it. His latest collaborator, Heist, has done an excellent job of replicating the classic Rufuge Kru sound. *Malice In Wonderland* is relentlessly anorganic, urgent and vivid with audio hallucinations. Cyborg dog barks, artificial insect buzz and synthetic steam rear out of its videogame landscape. With its soaring, wordless female vocal and simulated tribal drums, the outstanding “Letting Go (VIP)”, is epic and elegiac, a theme tune for an unmade anime. *Malice In Wonderland* may be a reconstructed relic, a reminder of futures past, but it is also a promise that is – at long last – made good.

MARK FISHER

Grails

Burning Off Impurities

TEMPORARY RESIDENCE CD

A Mount Rushmore-size bust of what looks like Karl Marx rises from a cracked desert floor to adorn the back of the latest album from Portland, Oregon’s Grails. The image captures something of the collision of the monumental, intellectual and revolutionary in their music. More importantly, it evokes the power of

massive rock that Grails unapologetically aspire to.

They proclaim to be “charting an unmapped course through the Bermuda Triangle between Black Sabbath, Ash Ra Tempel and Led Zeppelin”. However, the musical feel of *Burning Off Impurities* has a whiff of the mystery of Persia and the old Silk Road (placing them closer to Kraut fusion rockers Embryo’s track “Radio Marrakesh”) and conjures a powerful instrumental suite from just four players.

The opener “Soft Temple” moves like a carnival parade, with riffs wriggling like serpents, as the whole edifice glows in the desert sun. “Silk Road” builds up from the ground before a rising guitar riff appears like bandits on the horizon. “Drawn Curtains” returns to the beat of the opening track but adds a whiplash guitar lick. The standout, though, is the penultimate epic “Origin-ing”, with panoramic guitar chords and an epoch-rending riff that sends the album into the sunset flanked by flaming eagles.

NICK SOUTGATE

Graham Helliwell & Tomas Korber

The Large Glass

CATHNOR CD

In May last year, Swiss guitarist and electronics whiz Tomas Korber travelled to the depths of rural Norfolk to record three hours of music with the quiet man of British Improv, Graham Helliwell, whose exquisite sustained saxophone feedback has graced several fine releases in recent years, notably by +minus, his trio with Bernhard Günter and Mark Wastell (samples of whose work are discreetly incorporated into *The Large Glass*).

There are no Hendrix howls or Borbetomagus blares in Helliwell’s patient explorations, but playing with feedback is always playing with fire. The sense of danger is more palpable here than on his previous releases, perhaps because this was the first time he’d experimented with prerecorded, multitrack feedback in live direct-to-disk recording. Eliane Radigue (a Helliwell hero) often comes to mind, especially in the opening “The Essence Of Things”, not only because of the warmth of the low register drone but because of the skill with which Helliwell and Korber move the piece subtly forward from chilly screeches of filtered noise to a coda of delicate bell-like sonorities. Unlike much contemporary electroacoustic improvised music, which is often deadly, even dully serious in its investigation of rumbles and crackles, there’s something genuinely mysterious and inexplicably beautiful about this music. When those hairs stand up you know you’re on to something good, and the eerie, distant choirs that close the album are absolutely magical. Helliwell is fond of a rather atypical Marcel Duchamp quotation “an artist expresses himself with his soul, with the soul it must be assimilated”, and the titular reference to Duchamp’s *Large Glass* is deliberate, referring to a remark by Korber who suggested the music reminded him of stained glass. There is indeed a kind of cathedral resonance to the closing “Coarse Ashes”, as Helliwell’s tones cast fine shafts of pure colour into Korber’s dark vaulted spaces.

DAN WARBURTON

Howie B & Hubert Noi

Music For Astronauts And Cosmonauts

LATON CD

This is an unlikely collaboration. DJ/producer Howie B, lest we forget, came to prominence in the trip hop era – releasing records on the Mo’ Wax label, establishing his own Pussyfoot imprint, making records with a slew of mid-90s luminaries ranging from Björk to Tricky to U2 and beyond. But the wheels of fashion revolve unceasingly – in recent years, Howie B’s prominence has rested primarily on his longstanding and famously eclectic DJ residency at Fabric in London. But this project sees him straying beyond the boundaries of the music mainstream to work with a far more marginal figure – the Icelandic artist Hubert Noi. Music is just one of the many forms of expression that Noi habitually investigates – his work takes in photography, painting, film, sculpture and installation pieces.

These two widely separated minds have met over *Music For Astronauts And Cosmonauts*, a concept album if ever there was one, which took four years to make (from 1998 to 2002) and another four to see the light of day. The record was inspired by an interview with Björn Tryggvason, during which the Icelandic/Canadian astronaut described the passage of time during a 1997 space mission. Armed with the knowledge that a complete orbit of Earth takes precisely 90 minutes, the duo decided to create a real-time soundtrack for this curiously compressed day.

Spread over two CDs, *Music For Astronauts And Cosmonauts* is divided into four main movements (“Morning”, “Day”, “Evening” and “Night”), each with a duration of 22 minutes and 30 seconds; it’s bookended by three shorter pieces which chronicle countdown, take-off and landing. As “Morning” flows into “Day”, high quivering pulses subside into static; they’re delicately superseded by steadier, shimmering drones and the arrival of a percussion pattern which convey a new briskness without being obtrusive.

Cyclical shapes wax and wane throughout. “Evening” is shot through with cosmic whispers and muted points of high-frequency light; “Night” throbs darkly, its uneasy rumbles pregnant with interstellar distance. The stately closer “Into Landing” introduces richly distorted and ultra-sustained guitars. It’s a bracing end to a surprisingly beguiling trip.

CHRIS SHARP

Human Feel

Galore

SKIRL CD

Human Feel started out as protégés of American composer Gunter Schuller, putting out their debut album *Scatter* 15 years ago on his GM label. Like *Scatter*, *Galore* is a revealing title, because the greatest virtue/vice of this jazz/rock ensemble has always been the sheer profligacy of ideas. The line-up here consists of reedsman Chris Speed and Andrew D’Angelo, guitarist Kurt Rosenwinkel and former Bloodcount and Tiny Bell Trio member Jim Black on drums. Here, the delicate lyricism of “Cat Heaven”, reminiscent of one of Jim O’Rourke’s pop ideas, is followed by the restless clangour of “Improve”, which might be lifted from the oeuvre of Last Exit. “Fuck The Development Of You” is a slow rubato for

clarinet, with guitar overtones that weave in and out for more than 18 minutes. It kicks into something altogether heavier about halfway through and dabbles in false endings, free squalls and even angry satire.

It's hard to criticise musicians for having too many ideas, and Human Feel are one of the most important groups in their lineage of the last decade and a half. This reunion consolidates their place – the four voices each bring in new elements, in Rosenwinkel's case a fresh conception of 'jazz guitar', but also create a profound and undiminished sense of ensemble. Beautifully packaged in a longform box, this is one of the essential jazz records of this or any recent years.

BRIAN MORTON

Jason Kahn/Tomas Korber/ Christian Weber

Zürcher Aufnahmen

LONGBOX CD

Zürcher Aufnahmen is the first trio recording from Jason Kahn (percussion, synth), Tomas Korber (guitar, electronics) and Christian Weber (contrabass). Its six relatively short improvisations were knocked out in a day at the Werkstatt für Improvisierte Musik in Zurich, and they're all object lessons in edgy near-stasis. Each piece is coiled and tense, and the slowness that makes Kahn's recordings so attractive takes on a rather less lovely bent here, with the three players rendering a set of improvisations that are on first name terms with austere.

That's no bad thing. These three players share an impressive attention to sonic detailing, nudging their music on with the softest touches, daring to let the interaction of their respective instruments unfold for long stretches without decisive human contact. In this context, it's unsurprising that Weber's contrabass stands out the most. Late into the lengthy fourth track, he gouges deep tones out of the instrument, letting it slowly well up into a noisy crescendo before drifting away into high-pitched, virile electronics. On the opening piece, slow bowing produces a scrum of rasping tonality, acting as a rich denouement to the hollowed out percussion and overloaded, trebly whine that opens the disc.

If you've followed this trio's individual recordings or many of their collaborations, you'll have a fair idea of what to expect from *Zürcher Aufnahmen*, but despite its stoic coldness it offers plenty to the patient. Its quietly unyielding manner allows a group mind to emerge that's at a far remove from, for example, Reductionism's purism.

JON DALE

Dave Liebman

Homage To John Coltrane

OWL CD

Saxophonist Dave Liebman is best known for his early work with Miles Davis on *Get Up With It*, *On The Corner* and *Dark Magus*. But his idol is John Coltrane, for whom he's produced no less than three tributes. 1985's *Naima* with pianist Richard Beirach was followed in 1987 – the 20th anniversary of Coltrane's death – by *Homage To John Coltrane*, now reissued. *Tribute To John Coltrane* followed the same year, featuring Wayne Shorter.

On *Homage*, Liebman mostly plays soprano sax, and the album is distinctive for its double

group line-up. The first part of the record is entirely acoustic, with Jim McNeely on piano, Eddie Gomez on bass, Adam Nussbaum on drums and Caris Visentin on oboe; the second is electric, with Jim Beard on synth replacing McNeely, Mark Egan on electric bass guitar and Bob Moses on drums. Liebman tackles Coltrane classics such as "Crescent", "After The Rain", "India" and "Dear Lord", but is no pattern-playing Coltrane-ite. A thoughtful improvisor who adopts the 'mosaic' approach of Charlie Parker and Coltrane himself, his playing is alive, with plenty of space, suggesting spontaneous 'thinking in sound'. Jim Beard doesn't vary the textures much on synth, but it's convincing work and less prepared sounding than McNeely's work, who is nonetheless a fine pianist. I loved this album when it first appeared on LP, and it stands the test of time – a contemporary classic.

ANDY HAMILTON

Radu Malfatti

Hoffingerquartett

B-BOIM CD-R

Wechseljahre Einer Hyäne

B-BOIM CD-R

Hoffinger Nonett

B-BOIM CD-R

Raum Zeit I

B-BOIM CD-R

Nonostante II

B-BOIM CD-R

Listening to Austrian trombonist and composer Radu Malfatti's music is like looking through a window; you only become aware of the pane of glass itself when you catch a glimpse of your own reflection in it, or when the changing light beyond reveals the odd fingerprint or memories of rain etched in streaks of dust. Prior to the launch of his b-boim CD-R imprint, Malfatti hadn't released a full length disc of his compositions since 1997's solo trombone piece *die temperatur der bedeutung* and string quartet *das profil des schweigens* on Timescraper. But since the beginning of this year he's put out no fewer than 12 albums, each hand-burned and autographed, with no artwork and precious little information other than instrumentation and a few choice quotes from old friend Francis Brown, all in discreet lower case. It's not as if Malfatti is breaking a long silence, though, as silence accounts for more than two thirds of b-boim's inaugural release, the 72 minute *hoffingerquartett* (2005). The average duration of the 94 unpitched bowed wood sonorities that make up the work is about 20 seconds, with gaps between them ranging from 11 seconds to two minutes. Those familiar with *das profil des schweigens* might recognise the source sounds, which Malfatti has reused in this electronic realisation.

The transparency in Malfatti's music comes from the composer's conscious avoidance of anything obtrusive; dynamics are low throughout, there are no harsh attacks or sudden decays, and pitches, where noted at all, are often microtonally inflected to remove any association they might have with traditional melody and harmony. Timbre becomes more important, and despite obvious structural similarities, the music produces a radically different effect depending on its instrumentation, from the wan sonorities of the intriguingly titled saxophone quartet *wechseljahre einer hyäne* ("The Hyena's

Menopause") via the pale prime number sinewaves of 2006's *hoffinger nonett* (2006) and the dense string clusters of 1997's *raum zeit I* to the isolated piano plinks of *nonostante II* (2000). What might sound like an arid experience turns out to be a rewarding, often moving, opportunity to contemplate and re-evaluate the world around us.

DAN WARBURTON

Mansbestfriend

Poly.sci.187

ANTICON CD

Mansbestfriend is a side project for Anticon Records co-founder Tim 'Sole' Holland. Uncharacteristically for a man who helped pioneer underground rap in the late 90s, *Poly.sci.187* is a mostly instrumental album. 187 is police code for murder, and a number made famous by Dr Dre and Snoop Dogg's 1991 single "Deep Cover" ("Cause it's 187 on an undercover cop"). Or, as Sole put it in a press release, "Political Science: This Shit'll Kill You".

Accordingly, the 16 *Poly.sci.187* tracks are moody and ominous. The opener incorporates words from anarchist icon Emma Goldman, while "Bosnian Jazz" loops together hard drums and accordion samples. On "Father Vs Courage", Sole raps in a low conspiratorial voice: "In comes the media/A travelling circus/Here they come/To interview the workers/With a microphone in hand/But the workers can't be trusted." "Missile Defense" layers static noise with keyboards, providing the soundtrack to a payload drop in Baghdad.

Poly.sci.187 doesn't break new ground. Its tracks, however, are admirably consistent for someone without an established production pedigree. Its harshly acidic tone recalls Boards Of Canada and Thavius Beck, but its aggressively political tone is pure Sole. Its best cut is "Wilting Onward", which sounds like a scratchy power ballad running at half-speed.

MOSI REEVES

Massonix

Subtracks

SKAM CD

It's intriguing to come across music which flows outside of the torrent of by-numbers electronica and yet does not pretend or attempt to go anywhere beyond. This disc by 808 State's Graham Massey, aka Massonix, is one such oddity.

Subtracks is virtually a straight-up retrospective of Massey's rare live gigs of the past ten years (the album's made up of melodies and rhythms reworked from these sets). Then there's the nautical theme. A bank of those overly familiar 90s Ambient seashore sounds introduces the album, as opener "Port Silat" fades in with waves crashing and seagulls calling. I can only imagine Massey's tongue is tucked firmly in cheek.

But it's almost impossible not to get carried away by the throb of monochrome rhythms punctuated by luminous high pitched 303 droplets on "Sargasso". It's hard to ignore the determined parps blurting out the childlike melody of "Despina Farfisa". And the Mouse On Mars-like squelchy freaky-beated dissonance of "Boonadawn" is a joy. On "Gold Coast", the tribal noise may well indulge in monkey noises and other sampled calls of the 'wild' but its Old Skool rave battered by tribal thrumming contrasts gleefully with next track,

SLOTTET

RECORDS

"Attitude Is Everything"



Santa Maria

Maria Eriksson of The Concretes



Jean-Louis Huhta

Halfway Between The World And Death



Strountes

Mats Gustafsson
Santa Maria
Anla Courtis



DräpEnHund

"...DEH have fearlessly cut a killer cd."

- Thurston Moore



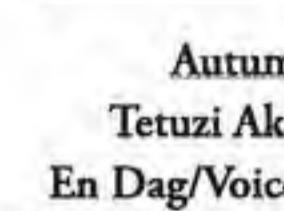
May Releases:

Boots Brown
Mats Gustafsson
Johan Berthling
David Stackenäs
Magnus Broo



Idiot Kid

Stunningly majestic debut produced by Johan Berthling of Tape/Häpna.



Autumn Releases:

Teutzi Akiyama & Gul 3
En Dag/Voice Of The 7 Woods
Christian Marclay/Mats Gustafsson

Mats In Japan

Mats Gustafsson Duos:
- Jim O'Rourke
- Otomo Yoshihide
- Yoshimi

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Innova Recordings: What's Going On

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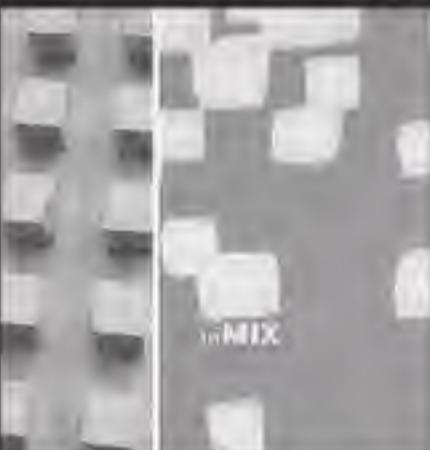
Stuart Hyatt and
Creative Clay:
Shrimp Attack

672



Mary Ellen Childs and
Ethel String Quartet:
Dream House

121



triMIX: installation
soundtracks
deconstructed,
Compiled by TJ Norris

673



Esther Lamneck
(clarinet/electronics):
Cigar Smoke
iTunes Podcasts:
"Alive and Composing"
"Measure for Measure"



the label of
the American
Composers
Forum

"Deep Saline Green", whose deep echoing underwater melody sounds like it's been crushed, then pieced together with sellotape.

SUSANNA GLASER

Daniel Menche

Animality

EMD PL / CD

A chronic inability to be pigeonholed for too long is arguably Daniel Menche's most potent trait. Lumped by default alongside the harshest purveyors of power electronics such as Aube and Masonna by virtue of his early Soleilmoon output, the Portland sound artist's eclectic body of work, from the abyssal drones of *Field Of Skin* and the bloodletting lacerations of *Jugularis*, has always wrongfooted the listener by sidestepping the chaotic style sheet of the aforementioned Japanoise behemoths for spiritual, sunchasing sound sculptures and humanised, elemental stimuli.

This is Menche's 'Amerindian' record, a mutant clash of animal skin, bones, fur and meat. Clocking in at just under an hour, *Animality* is elegantly packaged in a slick black digipack which unfolds into a curious prism. It starts with a tribal hum of ZEV-like bassy moose skindrum snares, sprinkled with glitches and tics that cackle in the fumic haze, and progressively narrows down to a single bar, only to ignite a cyclic wheeze after half an hour, punctuated here and there by mid-range elk drum tappings.

Menche astutely maintains momentum by ghostdancing his way into a hypnotic canyon, with the penultimate segment springing with didgeridoo-like dissonances, much of those culled from the 'residual' sounds of the drums. Eventually you feel like gallivanting round a campfire exorcising the demons of old for the final round – a sequential catharsis of rapid-fire catapults that envelops this stupendous breadth of sources into a third-eye-opening shamanic journey.

RICHIE RUCHPAUL

Monstrance

Monstrance

APE 2xCD

Given the suspicion with which some critics viewed Radiohead's embracing of 'experimental' music on *Kid A*, one wonders how XTC fans might react to Andy Partridge delivering an album of free improvisations with his ex-bandmate Barry Andrews, who left 27 years ago and went on to form Shriekback, and percussionist Martyn Baker, a 1984 addition to the latter's ensemble.

Partridge is a consummate pop songwriter, but the fact that he worked out all the guitar parts to Beefheart's *Trout Mask Replica* as a teenager bolsters his avant cred; his work with Peter Blegvad on 2003's *Orpheus – The Lowdown* also revealed an impressive capacity for soundscaping. Certainly no one seems out of their depth here. Andrews is particularly adept at timbral and textural swirls and splashes, and Baker is a subtle drummer adept at both polyrhythms and timbral interludes. Partridge asks questions of both of his co-performers throughout, nibbling away at the edge of the groove or settling into a Robert Fripp-esque mode, repeating one chord or phrase to telling effect.

Even so, two 40 minute-plus CDs feels a little too generous. Although the three

musicians have a definite rapport, when structure is hinted at before disappearing like a mirage, it seems, at least to this pair of ears, that it should be moving towards preserving and nurturing such forms. As a set of improvisations *Monstrance* works fine. But after several listens, it sticks in the mind more as bunch of sketches for some potentially decent songs or instrumentals.

MIKE BARNES

Mouthus

Follow This House

IMPORTANT CD

Follow This House sounds and feels like having taken the wrong medication when there's heavy machinery to be operated. It's noise rock in a drumless daze, too out of its head to get in your face, and so fascinated by a specific set of woozy sounds it's happy not to stretch out into the free spaces of psych. On "Cameras", the pitched-down goo which forms the basis of Mouthus's sound is so lugubrious, so sloth-like, it's as though whatever device is making it is trying to crawl off somewhere to quietly pull its own leads out. Gong tones and a distant idea of clattering percussion hover in the upper registers. On "Lake", the group conclusively pound their sounds' constituent elements into a state where sluggish distortion has demolished and then reinvented whatever tone the original instruments had. "Half-Thaw", the longest of the four tracks, loses itself in the fog of its own sonic entropy, but these tranquillised howls are redolent of Lee Ranaldo's *East Jesus* compilation and just as evocative of strange, secret, unknown atmospheres. This is music that has suspended its own consciousness; it's not one to have on in the background, where the damp decay of sonic surfaces would be missed, but nor can you listen to it directly for too long. You have to put it on, tweak your ears slightly out of focus and drift off with it.

SAM DAVIES

Marissa Nadler

Songs III

PEACEFROG CD

Marissa Nadler's secret is to sing songs as vivid and simple as dreams. *Songs III* is a notably more confident and fully realised production than its two predecessors *Ballads Of Living And Dying* and *The Saga Of Mayflower May* although the predispositions and predilections those albums titles suggest remain a constant.

Nadler's pure folk voice and her simple unadorned guitar style are the perfect tools for her songs. Indeed, her preference for plain thumb-picked or strummed guitar is refreshing among the endlessly flashy fingerpicking of many avant folk recordings. An occasional mandolin, quavering electric guitar, harp or strings may colour in the mood, but never at the expense of the songs.

They are tales of love, as with "Thinking Of You", where a sorrowful cello supports Nadler's dubbed harmony vocals. They are mainly songs of women's experience of love. "Rachel" is laden with doom and tells of strong women who hold men in sway to their beauty and desires, and is as Machiavellian as it is romantic. "Silvia" has a biblical lilt recalling Jonah's fate. "Silvia, I met you in the belly of a whale," she sings, drawing a dreamy allegory of trial and tribulation in love. Likewise the

closing Leonard Cohen cover "Famous Blue Raincoat" tells us that "Jane came by with a lock of your hair", and a trophy once shared between lovers prompts a rivalry to deepen, hopes to be shipwrecked, dreams to be betrayed. Nadler stokes every song with passion but the power comes from her unflinching embrace of the light and dark present in every passionate urge.

NICK SOUTHGATE

Sainkho Namchylak

Nomad

LEO CD

Sainkho Namchylak & Roy Carroll

Tuva-Irish Live Music Project

LEO CD

The release of *Nomad* marks Tuvan vocalist Sainkho Namchylak's 50th year. In 1997, preparations for the celebration of her 40th birthday were disrupted when she was attacked and hospitalised. During her recovery, struggling with post traumatic depression, she produced a privately pressed CD, *Time Out: Seven Songs For Tuva*. That collection of 'pure' songs, following years of radical vocal experiment, can be seen either as a step back into tradition or a step forward – her work can travel either timeline, like inhabiting parallel or intersecting universes.

There are two main threads in khoomei (overtone) singing: one incorporating pastorals and work songs, the other more mystical, even shamanic. Early in her career in Tuva, Namchylak would disguise shamanic music within more popular forms to avoid intervention by the authorities. All her work expresses the belief that there is something embedded within ancient cultures across the world that can be revealed through music, so this concealment entailed no necessary compromise. *Nomad* is a well-sequenced survey of Namchylak's remarkable range, from Improv and experimentalism to spiritual rituals and beautifully crafted songs. The first three tracks immediately confront us with an extreme juxtaposition of abstract vocal noise and beguiling lyricism, and *Nomad* is a useful springboard for anyone wishing to explore her work further.

Her collaboration with Irish computer musical Roy Carroll draws on Celtic as well as North Eurasian traditions, but also seamlessly absorbs many other diverse elements. Passages of premade music were fed into a music-generating computer program, and Namchylak and Carroll improvised against the results. *Tuva-Irish* is a mesmerising journey into most of Namchylak's alternative worlds, where you pass through bleak but lovely landscapes of electronics and overtones. One stumbles into inviting yet unsettling ceremonies of percussion and chanting, overhearing hushed conversations that are mystifying and enlightening in equal measure, all the while surrounded by ravishing soundscapes and tantalised by events just out of earshot.

BARRY WITHERDEN

Opsvik & Jennings

Commuter Anthems

RUNE GRAMMOFON CD

Eivind Opsvik and Aaron Jennings are young New York musicians active in a raft of projects,

including Hari Honzu, a quartet playing Ornette Coleman-inspired pop. *Commuter Anthems*, however, is a gentle ramble through a perkier kind of David Grubbs territory. With plenty of acoustic instruments and cunning software effects, it's a likeable album with a bucolic tinge. If it were a commute, it would be a ride through sunlit meadows.

On "Silverlake", banjo and lap steel catch at fragments of sleepy melody, while a pixie gamelan tinkles in the background, before modulating into water splashes and soft nylon guitar. "Commuter Anthem" has a theremin and a brass section in lurching time signatures. The writing here is celebratory and, well, anthemic, with a whiff of Sufjan Stevens. "Wrong Place, Right Time" uses string bass and harmonium to mosey through dark passages, but here too the sun finally emerges from clouds with a heartwarming sequence of chords. The broad range of instrumentation combined with laptop work recalls the excellent Swedish trio Tape.

Initial reservations that Opsiak & Jennings display cleverness rather than heart are dispelled with repeated listening. Their vision is odd, combining jazz and pop, melody and whimsy with a dollop of kitsch, but it is done with such delicacy and tenderness that this is an album one could fall in love with. On later tracks, they even start to let their hair down: "I'll Scrounge Along" is harmonium partying with string bass. Who could ask for more?

CLIVE BELL

Fabio Orsi & Gianluca Becuzzi Muddy Speaking Ghosts Through My Machines

A SILENT PLACE CD

The Stones Know Everything

DIGITALIS INDUSTRIES CD

Fabio Orsi/My Cat Is An Alien For Alan Lomax

A SILENT PLACE CD

The word 'sodality', meaning small group of comrades, is most commonly applied in Italy – the term has Roman Catholic origins – than elsewhere, but it seems apposite to describe the invigorated experimental rock pool that's emerging from that country right now. First to reach out, with a series of collaborative releases with Thurston Moore, Christian Marclay, Christina Carter and others, were the Opalio brothers from Turin's My Cat Is An Alien, but closer investigation revealed a brimming world of electric buzz, cosmic sparks and Isolationist electronics, courtesy of Giuseppe Ielasi, %HadBeenEliminated, Andrea Belfi and Alessandro Stefana, and labels like A Silent Place and Small Voices – not to mention Sweden's Häpna and Tulsa, Oklahoma's Digitalis, who are also keen supporters of this new musica elettronica viva.

27 year old Fabio Orsi, from Naples, is a core member of the avant sodality. Self-described as a field recordist, phonographer and digital processor, he has formed a partnership with Gianluca Becuzzi, a composer of spatial electronics active since the 1980s. *Muddy Speaking Ghosts...*, their first duet, weaves digitally re-pitched ballads from Alan Lomax's celebrated folksong-gathering expeditions into subtly spun Ambient webs in which electric guitars, background hiss and rattling stones all play a part. This is Alan Lomax reimagined by Spaceways

Incorporated: folk songs hoarded as talismans from distant worlds – distant, that is, in time rather than space.

Blues fixated work like this is no *Joshua Tree*, digging-for-roots type of endeavour. *The Stones Know Everything* takes off from the scratchy phonographic patina you hear in the recordings of Robert Johnson, Leadbelly and Skip James, the supernatural suspicion that a ghostly presence is being transmitted through the static, via the mystical process of the needle's fruitful ploughing of the groove. A valve transistor warmth infuses these two duos. On "Another Night Is All Around", a lone guitar trudges through a dusty drone, before a quenching rain falls after eight minutes.

By clearing away some of this grit on his 38 minute track on *For Alan Lomax*, Orsi ends up in cleaner, leaner Ambient climes. Until another blues holler appears in the closing minutes, it had begun to sound like a lost Fax release. On "Heart Of The Earth", meanwhile, the MCIAA mini-sodality conduct a ritual mass on "electric astral guitar, space toys, alientronics", and allude to Lomax's roots revelations with a galactic shower of harmonica. It's the kind of music you can't actually picture physically being made; it seems conjured, the ectoplasmic residue of a séance. In every sense, given the dedicatee, a spiritual.

ROB YOUNG

Ov Noctilucent Valleys

SOFT ABUSE CD

A collaboration between Jewelled Antler co-founder Loren Chasse and Christine Boepple of Skygreen Leopards and Kyrgyz, Ov deal in tentative loop based compositions which hover uncertainly, then drift off into the ether. In a way, the phantasmic electroacoustica of Ov represents the bright flipside of the gregarious, 'taboo-breaking' churn of the US underground as embodied by artists such as Wolf Eyes and Prurient. Nonetheless, its effect is, at least initially, similarly numbing.

For some five or so tracks, *Noctilucent Valleys* dithers in a manner all too familiar to observers of American miniaturist noise. It's winsome and pretty, but little more than aural air freshener, and certainly nothing to trouble such proponents of skewed beauty as Ben Vida of Town & Country and Bird Show.

If this were the case for the entire record, there would be scarcely any reason to give it a second airing. But when the duo finally get it together roughly halfway through the album, the results are spellbinding and more than a little reminiscent of the fertile Bristol scene of the mid- to late 90s, encompassing such artists as Flying Saucer Attack, Crescent, Third Eye Foundation and Foehn. There's a similar suspension between delicacy and immensity, leaving the listener awash in the ageless eddies of a perpetual present that nevertheless ends too soon. It's a despicable cliché to assert that an album would have made a fantastic EP with a certain amount of judicious editing, but in this case undeniably accurate.

JOSEPH STANNARD

Andrew Pekler

Cue

KRANKY CD

It's official: the hauntological, 'nostalgia for the future', Mordant Music/Ghost Box world,

where testcards, brutalist architecture and the BBC Radiophonic Workshop all rule supreme, is now a train-jumping vogue. Andrew Pekler's music has keyed in with the times at various points during his decade-long career, from the electronica of The Sad Rockets to the micro-edits of *Nocturnes, False Dawns And Breakdowns*, and *Cue* is his latest to tap into the zeitgeist, a dream construction of instrumental music from memory's own library.

That probably sounds a little harsh, and it would be easy to stay cynical if Pekler's simulacrum of Library Music wasn't so enjoyable. In much the same way that many artists use suggestive titles as talismans, Pekler wrote descriptions of individual songs, much like those that appear as mood gauges on the back of library records, and then built pieces that fit these descriptions, tweaking the text as the music led him off track. This highly programmatic approach has resulted in an album that uses its limits as its crutches, essaying 11 slices of loveliness that are content to go nowhere in particular.

Pekler has the language of Library Music down pat, cottoning on to its inherently faceless, functional qualities. *Cue* is heavy on tiny melodies that pleasantly catch in the craw, tin soldier rhythms, whispering bells and percussion, and fleeting, abstract bursts of electronics. Line it up alongside The Advisory Circle or the more eldritch sections of Position Normal's albums, and it sits just fine.

JON DALE

Pentangle

The Time Has Come (1967–1973)

CASTLE 4xCD

With a wraith-like female voice over two softly duelling guitars and a knotty bedrock of hep bass and skim percussion, Pentangle could almost be the ancestral pale blueprint of certain icy 90s UK groups like Seefeel and MBV... Ha, right, OK, that comparison is a bit off the wall; but one true thing is that, 40 years on, Pentangular music hasn't dated a chime, pluck, wassail or gurdy.

A lot of this could have been recorded last week – or next. It embodies all the bold-axis patchwork virtues of its late 60s time, with few of its droll affectations or ponderously 'heavy' motifs. This is fiery acoustic rock so seamless, so ego-free – at times the intertwining branch lines of John Renbourn and Bert Jansch and the flinty river-run rhythms of Danny Thompson and Terry Cox evoke Joe Zawinul's notable anti-muso dictum: 'Everybody solos, nobody solos'. For various reasons Jansch has become the trademark face of Pentangle, but as the pale rainbow of differently melancholy work on these four CDs makes clear, this was a collective enterprise of the most perfect kind. Drummer/percussionist Cox has to be the most overlooked partner – he has an astonishingly light touch, at times virtually invisible but always the rudder of their distinctive hop-skip sound. Cox's dovetail partnership with Thompson predicts the latter's mid-70s dream voyage with John Martyn, in which the strait lace of folk is run through a shuttle of blues grit, Scots rumble, boozy emotiveness.

Pentangle had less oomph and snarl, maybe, but they were there first: listen to the taut 'instrumental edit' of "Jack Orion" from 1970 here and it is *Inside Out* all over. English restraint, alchemised by Celtic fire, Mingus

MELO049



windmill

PUDDLE CITY RACING LIGHTS

'Although his music is timeless and graceful, 26-year-old Matthew Thomas Dillon is in thrall to modern American indie. The boy from Buckinghamshire treads the same ground as Mercury Rev and Arcade Fire, but his style is utterly his own. High, pained vocals curdle the cosy piano melodies that propel each song and shatter any idea of Dillon as a safe singer-songwriter.'

4/5 The Guardian

'Don't be fooled into thinking that a finer album will be released this year.' Flux

'Freakoid Americana that sounds like a lost Mercury Rev or Grandaddy album. Not bad for a one-man band from Newport Pagnell.' NME

'Dillon might be a great British eccentric in the making' Uncut

Windmill live:

22/5 Paris Divan du Monde

23/5 London Water Rats

28/6 London Luminaire

30/6 Stockholm Debaser

4/7 Rennes Les Tombées de la Nuit festival

11/8 Lille Nuits Secrètes festival

15/8 St Malo La Route Du Rock festival

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Size Matters Non-standard formats, sifted and sampled

Dan Cashman & Matt Weston Duo *Dan*

Cashman & Matt Weston Duo BREAKING WORLD 3" CD Grey Skull dude meets Mr Barn Owl for a drums/vocals showdown hoot as wild as some of those legendary Corsano/Dredd match-ups. But the sonics on this are nasty. There's no single 'lick' as wholesome as the sweet manure that other duo dropped. This is mean squeedle of the raunchiest variety – overloaded on the day it was born and sorry for nada.

Death Chants *Sound Of The Rain/North Carolina* AZRIEL 7" The A side is not a Dils cover, but that's OK. This primarily acoustic quartet, based in Philadelphia, is not as Fahey-damaged as their name might infer, but they do manage to create and nurture an internal instability I suspect Fahey would have enjoyed. Subtly shifting strings meet willowy electronic constructions, and everyone just sorta bends and plinks in the wind. Hard to exactly explain what's going on here, but it's gorgeous to hear. Nice Nemo mirror-line cover art, too.

Dredd Foole & The Din *Songs In Heat*

RELIGIOUS 7" Wow. Cool. It appears there was a little cache of this 1982 EP set aside at the time it was originally pressed, and right now has been determined to be the correct moment to unleash a 25th anniversary edition, replete with new cover art, signed inserts and a small poetry broadside. The backing group on Dredd's first session was Mission Of Burma, and they sound totally great – true bastard sons of The Velvets. And Dredd fills the air with the most savagely rockin' tunage he would ever sing – straight and twisted in the same breath. It's an incredible sound, still, 25 years on. And in it you can hear the beginning of a howling legend.

Lambsbread *King Of The Crop* SKULLTONES 7" After one billion tapes and CD-Rs, these Ohio bong-heads finally bust out a single, a feckless jumble of sky-lancing tone if e'er I heard one. As shapeless as a bag full of badgers, but just as wiggly in every way. Sounds like they're rolling bones as big as Jamaica itself, although the fact that they rock is impossible to hide, no matter how deep they burrow.

Emeralds *Golden Swirl* WAGON NO 29 3" CD This Ohio unit is part of the same rabidly pro-cheeb scene as Lambsbread. But where Lambsbread represent Dionysian chaos personified, Emeralds are manifestations of a far more Apollonian nature. Their electronics have some antic qualities, but mostly (here, anyway) they allow their interior surfaces to unspool like a great roll of softly bubbling metal. And it's magnetic as hell.

Flower-Corsano Duo *The Undisputed Dimension/The Fifth Truth* NO FI 7" Guitarist Mick Flower (from Vibracathedral Orchestra) and drummer Chris Corsano (from everywhere else) collude here on a profoundly compacted duo recording – one that almost has the feel of Devotion-era McLaughlin, somehow

compressed into an area approximately ten per cent the size of the original. This music isn't airless (far from it – it's actually explosive), but it feels as though it originates in a place where density is the only physical law. Cool.

Yellow Swans/Goslings *Bored Fortress Split NOT NOT FUN* 7" One of the noisiest entries in this esteemed series of shared singles. Yellow Swans' untitled track is a surging, rotating wall of amp noise about three feet high. It spins around the room like a brick. The less well known Goslings are from Florida, and produce a thick psychedelic sludge with treated vocals and many small explosions happening just out of eyesight. It reminds me a bit of what Little Claw might sound like if they were very high on Romilar. Glug.

GHQ/Ex-Cocaine *Bored Fortress Split NOT NOT FUN* 7" GHQ – the meeting of Marcia Bassett, Pete Nolan and Steve Gunn – produces a nicely tapered drone here. Their sonics are just the right size to insert snugly into your ear, although the whole shebang immediately begins to expand, slowly filling your brain in the process. Ex-Cocaine are a solidly weird Michigan bunch with roots in Universal Indians (John Olson's pre-Wolf Eyes unit). They're in extreme clack-form here, creating a series of pulsed events that speed past your window like rickety fence posts. Abstract, but choice.

Noise Nomads *Wombixe Nerkumm/Tarkas Ramma* BONESCRAPER 7" Although originally based in Providence, RI, it seems as though this solo project by Jeff Hartford has more recently relocated to Massachusetts. At least, I see him around a lot. This single is a great example of what he does – part crunchy power electronics, part freeform freak rock drumming. When they happen on top of each other, the results are pretty brain-splitting.

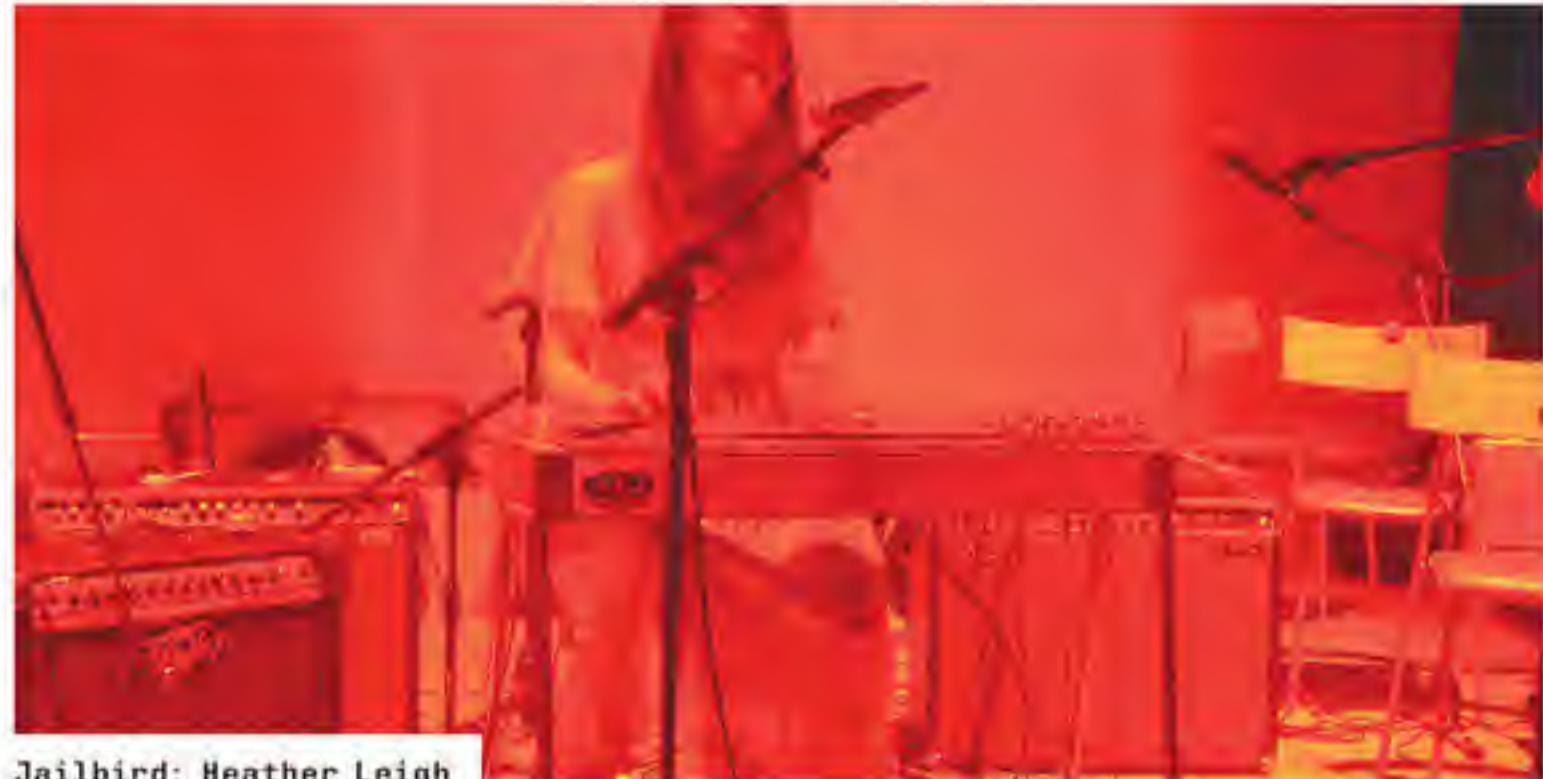
Tarp *Yurt #1/Yurt #2* APOSTASY/BREAKING WORLD 7" Great debut single by an electronic duo based in Western Mass. Conrad Capistran and Joshua Burkett have participated in numerous musical forays over the years, but Tarp seem to be the first one that truly captures their spirit beasts. The pair's live shows have a tendency to be sequences of almost unrelated statements and gushes, but this recording catches them in a highly communicative mood – bouncing sounds and ideas in and out of each other's ears, noses and throats. Primitive to an almost Simeonian degree, the music here is delivered like a slab of meat slapped on your doorstep with all the pomp a good steak deserves. Great cover art by George Meyers, too. BYRON COLEY

Eye *Interlock/Memory Slip* CMR 7"+CD-R You name it, if it's a significant point in the New Zealand underground, drummer and lyricist Peter Stapleton has been there. His playing career tracks key developments in NZ music, and Eye is one of its latest outposts, an outfit with turntablist Ryan Cockburn and guitarist

Peter Porteous. "Interlock" has the trio forcing gusts of soot-filled air from their instruments; "Memory Slip" is more recognisably beyond-rock in construction, with Stapleton at his primal best behind the kit. The CD-R documents one long performance that moves in waves, from tiny tremors to seismic ruptures, a glorious reminder of NZ free noise's capacity for unending regeneration.

into reflective chimes and strikes, like an ensemble of those fantastic kids' apple-bell toys. The title track continues in the same vein, touching on the wild universes of both Harry Partch and traditional gamelan. Sounds completely witchy at any speed.

Vodka Soap *Shadow Watcher Levitations/Infinite Way Class* NEW AGE MC *Un Chand Pyramidelier* NEW AGE MC *Parallel Visitation*



Jailbird: Heather Leigh

Heather Leigh *Jailhouse Rock* FAG TAPES MC Leigh was the third member of the heaviest Charalambides line-up (circa *Joy Shapes*) and she's currently a member of Taurpis Tula; her solo music has recently been moving further out into even more brutal vectors of mercury sound. The two sides of *Jailhouse Rock* mostly consist of supercharged pedal steel playing, as if the instrument is repeatedly collapsing in on itself, with Leigh swooping at its strings with broad strokes. Her unaccompanied voice intro at the start of the set is disarmingly gentle, but she's not messing around: this is pedal steel as I've always wanted to hear it – burning through to the Earth's core.

Plains Underground CLAUDIA 3" CD-R Auckland, New Zealand supergroup featuring, for this live performance from June 2006, Tim Coster, Richard Francis, Rosy Parlane, Mark Sadgrove, Clinton Watkins and Paul Winstanley. All members work with computer or feedback/electronics, and the resulting 17 minute improvisation doesn't stray too far from the usual model for digital group interactions. However, while the lexicon is unsurprising, with low-slung purr, scratchy field recordings and peals of high-end, *Underground* is one of the few computer group Improvs you'll want to return to.

Hal Rammel *Like Water Tightly Wound* CROUTON 10" Latest dispatch from the idiosyncratic world of this American polymath. It's packaged by Crouton in a 78 rpm sleeve, which makes the record feel like a blast from the distant past, keying in with Rammel's musical interests. On this record, he plays his 'amplified palette' with great inquisitiveness. "On Balance Scattered" scrapes away at the rods affixed to the artist's palette, sourcing all kinds of wild drag and scratch, before settling

NATURE TAPE LIMB MC *Snake Figures Fan* *Snake Figures Fan* NEW AGE MC A bunch of rudely packaged cassettes from side projects of San Francisco duo The Skaters. The first two tapes reissue earlier titles from Spencer Clark's Vodka Soap; *Shadow Watcher Levitations/Infinite Way Class* bundles two sets from 2005, and the action here is murky as hell, with Clark's vocals fighting their way out of tar-encrusted muck. Everything's slurred and woozy, with hand-torn tape edits. 2006's *Un Chand Pyramidelier* and *Parallel Visitation* mark significant progress. Clark weaves ecstatic bells and cryptic pseudo-religious incantations together to create a kind of Fourth World reverie all the more potent for being irreducible to any known continent. Sometimes it sounds like Clark has grabbed a random clutch of ethnic field recordings and channelled them through the shrouding haze of a dust-covered four track recorder. Its sunblind and spool-threaded chants make for wild, potent stuff.

The first in a trilogy of tapes tracking James Ferraro's Mexican travels, *Snake Figures Fan* offers a holistic reflection on his encounters in the "summer cave shrines of Chihuahua", and they're rough-as-guts and highly effective, flitting between hypnotic mantras, the incandescent rumble of hand drums, galactic vox and drowsy arrangements for celestial improvisation. The sudden jolts of brutish tape splicing are often the key propulsive force, shuttling you between zones as though you're being rudely teleported through time. At times close in spirit to Angus MacLise's hand-drum/electronics duels and his brutish noise compositions, *Snake Figures Fan* is simply earth shattering. JON DALE

thump under folkie rectitude, mad 60s magpie tendencies held tight within bright pop economy: an object lesson in how to revivify the past (and the pastoral) with tact and grace, wisdom and hunger. For a band of gypsies whose course through the business of rock was so markedly un-starred and seemingly ad hoc, their music seems to have a lot of return left in it yet.

IAN PENMAN

Pharaoh Overlord Live In Suomi Finland

VIVO CD

Any group that chooses a name like Pharaoh Overlord must surely have a sense of the dramatic – the epic, even. On this 2006 live recording the Finnish group explore the sort of riff-based Om-rock that makes a nod of acknowledgment to the appropriately cyclical monotony of their compatriots Circle – not surprising as they share members – while also invoking the minor daemon of Loop, a group keen to namedrop influences like The Stooges, Can and Faust, even when their hairy tech college riffs recalled the somewhat less transcendental Edgar Broughton Band.

Pharaoh Overlord – here swelled to a sextet with keyboards from Hans-Joachim Irmler from one of the two extant versions of Faust – don't mess about with anything as trivial as track titles. Track one shows quite clearly where they are at, though, with an unremarkable rock 'n' roll riff tolling in the background tracked by a constant 4/4 beat from drummer Tommi Leppänen. But it gains momentum as it continues, buffeted by guitar noise and Irmler's distorted keyboards, and by the close it's surprising that 11 minutes have elapsed.

The second track, riding more subtle percussion and minimal, intertwining guitar motifs, and sounding just a little like Australian trio The Necks, has its meditative calm suddenly ruffled by an unidentified outburst at the close, but then track two rolls into track three and all of a sudden they total nearly 15 minutes. While it's easy to be sucked into this steady, seemingly endless repetition, towards the end of a 50 minute set, you wonder how it might have been, had the rhythm section harried the guitars and keyboards rather than simply acting as a foundation for their noise surges. Aided by the reverberative live dynamic, *Live In Suomi Finland* is a massive, steadily stir-fried noise.

MIKE BARNES

Pere Ubu The Tenement Year

MERCURY CD

Cloudland

MERCURY CD

Worlds In Collision

MERCURY CD

Story Of My Life

MERCURY CD

Seen from a distance, which is to say in its entirety, Pere Ubu's output for Fontana between 1988 and 1993 stands as concrete testimony to how important Roxy Music have been to the development of rock. Seen from up close, which is to say in fragmented detail, it's hard to tell a sophisticated Top 40 tunesmith like Crocus Behemoth from a blunderingly naive experimenter like Bryan Ferry. How well they must understand each other.

Digitally remastered and loaded, like its companion volumes, with alternate takes, B sides and extras, *The Tenement Year* (1988) is basically the first two Roxy Music albums rolled into one. The Pere Ubu sound still has all of those fabulously random synthesizer stabs, swoops and ululations that Brian Eno used to do so well on tunes like "Virginia Plain" and "Do The Strand". It's also what made *The Modern Dance* and *Dub Housing* such thrilling distractions at teen parties back in the day. Similarly, bonus track "The B-Side" has the same stark indifference to people buying singles just for the A side that early Roxy Music used to display.

As a follow-up, 1989's *Cloudland* covers everything from the post-Eno *Stranded* to *Flesh And Blood*. The electronics are suddenly much politer in their behaviour, and the vocal arrangements sound like reinterpretations of old Byrds numbers. But in Pere Ubu it sounds great. This reissue is based on the original recordings made at Prince's Paisley Park studio, and the writing really shines through the airbrushed smoothness of "Race The Sun" and "Waiting For Mary". This, however, can't possibly prepare you for the absolute genius of "Bang The Drum", another B side throwaway that also happens to be the finest ballad in history registered on a dictaphone belt.

Worlds In Collision from 1991 represents all the dreadful cover versions Bryan Ferry ever put out – except that Pere Ubu were smart enough to retain only the titles of the originals for theirs. The "Mirror Man" on offer here is neither by Human League nor Captain Beefheart but could easily pass for both, while extra track "Like A Rolling Stone" is probably the most interesting song Bob Dylan never wrote. The purity and simplicity of *Story Of My Life* (1993), on the other hand, are both signs of Pere Ubu dispensing with the whole box of tricks, taking another look at the rulebook and revealing themselves to be the last group left on Earth to care about rock. Which is a tough act to follow, even for Bryan and the boys.

KEN HOLLINGS

Powerhouse Sound Oslo/Chicago: Breaks

ATAVISTIC 2xCD

Much of Ken Vandermark's music has involved a coming to terms with the history of jazz and his own place in it. But Powerhouse Sound is also a reckoning with his own history, especially the Vandermark Quartet recordings between 1993–95. The quartet's boisterous, largely free jazz stylings were unpinned by crunchy rock rhythms. The group were loud, tough and brash, and Powerhouse Sound are the nearest Vandermark has since come to replicating their considerable heft and wallop.

The group were formed in Oslo in 2005, and their first incarnation included the electric bass guitarists Ingebrigt Häker Flaten and Nate McBride, drummer Paal Nilssen-Love and Lasse Marhaug on laptop. All themes here are composed by Vandermark, on tenor throughout. Unlike most of his work, which are top-down constructions, this material was built from the bottom up, emphasising bass and drums. Perhaps that's why some tracks bear dedications to reggae luminaries – King Tubby, Coxsone Dodd, Lee Perry and Burning Spear – though, apart from some dub-style manipulations at the close of the second

version of "Coxsonne" (sic), you'd be hard pushed to identify reggae as an inspiration. The wild card in the Oslo group is Marhaug, whose spectrum sweeps, shifting blocks of noise and raw filtration of captured speech is employed both as texture and solo.

On the second CD the compositions are repeated, though mostly as a series of medleys by the Chicago group of Vandermark, McBride, John Herndon (drums) and Jeff Parker (guitar). With only one electric bass, this group are lighter on their feet. Parker and (occasionally) McBride use pedal distortion to compensate for the absence of Marhaug. Doubling up the tracks (though on the Chicago CD there's an additional track, dedicated to Bernie Worrell) could easily have resulted in ho-hum replication, but the approach taken by the two groups to the material emphasises their differences rather than their similarities, and nothing disappoints.

BRIAN MARLEY

Pure

Fetor

FREAK ANIMAL CD

Mirag

Witch Queen Ascending

NO LABEL CD-R

Not to be confused with the one-time Mego artist of the same name, this Pure consists solely of Matthew Bower of Skullflower, Sunroof! and Hototogisu infamy. Birthed in the early 1980s as a guitar based power electronics trio, the original Pure line-up of Bower, Alex Binnie and Alex Winsor took early Wasp noise exponents Whitehouse at their word while performing live actions that drew from thirdhand accounts of the Viennese Aktionists. By the late 1980s, Bower had retired Pure and was recording as Total and in Skullflower, and though *Fetor* leaked out on cassette under the Pure name, it's essentially early Total in form.

Having said that, you could easily make a case for this stuff being a throwback to early 80s noise. The splintered sheets of ferocious guitar that Bower scrawls over all the tracks gesture toward landmark Total albums like *Tanzmusik Der Renaissance*, but the strained vocals and primitive rhythmic loops could have fallen directly off a Broken Flag cassette. *Fetor* proves how consistent Bower's vision has been – no one else at the time was approaching the guitar in quite the same fashion, and the period piece curiosity value soon gives way, on tracks like "Null" and "Untitled", to an impressive density of texture. A previously unreleased live track from October 1988, a duo with Stefan Jaworzyn, is a prototype for early Skullflower, but it's the six *Fetor* tracks that startle the most.

Mirag is Bower's latest alias, his tribute to Metal in its various forms – apparently, every self-respecting noise dude now has a Metal side project. In its singleminded focus on the meeting place of six stressed strings and over-saturation of the sonic spectrum, it actually feels at times like an update of Pure's, uh, purity. "Armed With Dragon's Blood" opens *Witch Queen Ascending* with predictable 'face down in the dirt' excoriation, but by the closing "Draw Wand" Bower has sent the guitar refracting through the air, a blinding light streaming directly into your eyes.

JON DALE

Howard Riley Trio Discussions

JAZZPRINT CD

The session that resulted in *Discussions*, British pianist Howard Riley's debut recording, took place in South London at the end of December 1967, with a trio including Barry Guy on double bass and drummer Jon Hiseman. Guy had already been playing with Spontaneous Music Ensemble, and Hiseman would go on to form jazz rock group Colosseum the following year. *Discussions* appeared on vinyl in a limited run from a small independent label and has now been reissued for the first time.

It opens with the ballad "Sweet And Lovely", a hit for Bing Crosby before its appropriation as a jazz standard, notably by Thelonious Monk. The trio are immediately restless in such circumscribed orbits, even within the latitude extended by Miles Davis's "Nardis"; they are audibly moving out. It's consequently a busy set overall, Hiseman's characteristic tumbling clamour often matched by piano and bass, spilling in their excitement beyond the music's formal contours, and the sense of agitation heightened by an acoustic that Riley himself describes as "boxy".

Discussions is not the right place to begin investigation of the performers of this trio, but in terms of recording it was the beginning for Guy and Riley, and as such it certainly has historic interest.

JULIAN COWLEY

Terry Riley

Les Yeux Fermés & Lifespan

ELISION FIELDS CD

This intriguing if minor release reissues a pair of long out of print Terry Riley obscurities: two 1970s soundtracks that lack the intensity and creative depth of a fertile decade, when he had shed his 60s minimalist baggage for complex loop and tape delay-assisted improvisations for organ and soprano sax.

The better of the two, *Les Yeux Fermés*, dates from 1972. It was released in Europe as a soundtrack LP for Joël Santoni's film, and in the US as a standalone album entitled *Happy Ending*, and is rather like *A Rainbow In Curved Air* with training wheels attached. *Journey From The Death Of A Friend*, an organ piece in Riley's signature style, generates familiar patterns of spiralling repetition. *Happy Ending* opens with *Poppy Nogood*-style soprano loops, but soon flatlines unnaturally into banal sustained organ and sax melodies.

Riley's score for Alexander Whitelaw's *Lifespan* (better known by its French title, *Le Secret De La Vie*) was recorded a few years later and is more obviously shaped by the imperatives of the soundtrack format. The intricacies of Riley's playing are compressed into brief snippets, forced into jarring juxtapositions, slowed down or overlaid with insipid vocal melodies.

Although it's revealing to hear him attempt to adapt so distinctive and identifiable a music to fit a context for which it plainly isn't suited, the end result is a flawed compromise. Riley's lack of success in the endeavour is testament to the singularity of his 70s 'dervish' music. But it also means that both albums sound like footnotes to his more substantial works of the period.

NICK CAIN

The Compiler Various artists: reviewed, rated, reviled



Those Lovely Hula Hands

Psychedelic Phinland: Finnish Hippie & Underground Music 1967–1974 LOVE 2xCD Compiler and annotator Jukka Lindfors and collaborators Timo Vuorio and Sini Perho were also responsible for *Arktinen Hysteria*, a widely appreciated CD overview of early Finnish avant garde luminaries released on Love Records in 2001. In this new archival project they document musical artefacts from the right-hand side of Scandinavia, arranged into one disc of pop-related tropes of counterculture consciousness, and a second of fully freaked abstractions from the likes of Sperm and Those Lovely Hula Hands. Disc one includes such arcana as the first Finnish mention of marijuana on a pop single, Hector & Oscar's promptly banned "Savu" ("Smoke") from 1967, and one of those perky, square send-ups of hip culture "Hippijortsut Pöhkölässä" ("Hippie Ball At Nutsville") from comedian Jorma Ikävalko, before warming up with the Beatles-inflected sounds of Finland's biggest acts of the era, Blues Section and Wigwam. Things then get heavier, with guitar workouts from the likes of The Baby Grandmothers, and snatches of mystic troubadourism and wacky political rock 'n' roll theatrics, some of which will be lost on those of us without Finnish. Disc two will afford the main attractions for most readers of *The Wire*. The Sperm, stars of *Arktinen Hysteria*, unload the 16 minute abstract guitar concerto "Locusts I", which on its own makes this set worth hearing; also worthy of mention is both ten minute sides of the self-released 7" by Sikiöt, an out-of-nowhere masterpiece of DIY scramble from this gently toking, record-toting ensemble, evoking such genre reference points as *A Second Nose*. JON BYWATER

You Are Hear Sessions (2002–06) HEARING AID CD London's Resonance FM's current studio space is a bohemian wet dream of cramped dilapidation and romantic underfunding. Future generations will look back with envy, but nervously. Meanwhile DJs Magz Hall and Jim Backhouse have spent four years coaxing live acts onto their You Are Hear radio show

for Resonance to perform exclusively for the show (à la John Peel, but 100 per cent live in the studio), and here they cherrypick their 20 favourite sessions. Much of this comes with an extra edge because it was played live in a tiny space – amazing that Pram (Midlands exotica) and Oddfellows Casino (Canterbury rock) managed to squeeze in at all. Murcof (Mexican electronica) and Noxagt (Norwegian noiseniks) are darkly ominous, while San Francisco's Oxbow sound no less intense for being only one voice and an acoustic guitar. In lighter vein is the playtime electro of The Man From Uranus, and the Casio versus theremin punch-up of Ninki and Carter Tutti's contribution is a typically classy chunk of electronic driftwood. Then No Bra drop by with their ultra-droll "Munchausen" ("Really? I was very briefly in a band called Clock DVA." "Really?"), and the music staggers round a hall of comedy mirrors. Germlin's nerdcore "Key Lime" is far too short, and Miss Hawaii's "Pyramid" is rampant chaos from a Japanese laptopper formerly known as MC Cambodia. David Grubbs sings over a bristling guitar, and This Is The Kit are an endearing folk duo who have supported Vetiver. If you haven't been listening, this is a quick and easy education. CLIVE BELL

Pram



Need For A Crossing: A New New Zealand

Volume 1 XERIC CD The awful title pun isn't the only thing wrong with this compilation, a well-meaning but ill-conceived and unsuccessful attempt to survey the state of Antipodean noise, rock and Improv in the post-Corpus Hermeticum era. Given the surplus of exciting music to have emanated from New Zealand in recent years, the line-up is bemusingly unadventurous: a handful of established names (Birchville Cat Motel, Greg Malcolm, Peter Wright), a few token curveballs (Gfrenzy, Leighton Craig), and a pronounced bias towards Stefan Neville and Anthony Milton, who are credited with the compilation's "New Zealand coordination" – they share four of the ten tracks between them. Six or seven years ago, this selection might have had some claim to newness, but in 2007 it's conservative at best. The tracks on offer, all of middling quality, yield no surprises to anyone who follows New Zealand music with any degree of diligence, and unhelpfully misrepresent it to those who don't. The booklet artwork – a series of silver-tinted photos of empty roads – and the press release's description of the New Zealand scene as "trapped in splendid isolation on the verdant backside of the planet" project a patronisingly simplistic interpretation of the social and geographical realities of both the country and the music its inhabitants produce. NICK CAIN

Studio One Kings SOUL JAZZ CD/2xLP Soul Jazz continue to mine the Studio One archives with another theme that becomes obvious once it is explored. This is a roll-call of the many major names who became reggae royalty – Alton Ellis, Burning Spear, Johnny Osbourne, Freddie McGregor, Cornell Campbell and more. Also in the list is Joe Higgs, vocal mentor to The Wailers, and his "Change Of Plan" is a one-away rhythm that's worth the price of the album alone. Most of the rhythms here are one-offs or relatively rare, and several lesser known artists take their turn on the mic. The tunes range through ska, rocksteady, roots reggae and lovers, with Devon Russell's "Roots Music" a standout. Freddie McGregor's 12" cut of Bob Dylan's "I Shall Be Released", weighing in over nine minutes, is a Leroy Sibbles arrangement, developing The Heptones' earlier version and providing the template for a later Upsetter version at the Black Ark, with vocals dubbed out over the urgent rhythm and heavenly horns. STEVE BARKER

Deep Sea Shipping LAGUNAMUCH COMMUNITY CD An Ambient compilation from Lagunamuch, a Russian label formed in 2002 which specialises in dub, electronica and post-rock releases. The first track, "Initialization" by Selffish – the conceptual artist behind this compilation – freedives into the deep blue unknown and even slips in a sample of Vladimir Ussachevsky's electronic composition *Wireless Fantasy*. But that's as futuristic as it gets. Elsewhere,

"The Flight Day" by Riverz End, no doubt named after the Skinny Puppy instrumental, delves into the kind of ethnomusicological textures and floating, eerie washes explored by Mark Spybey of :soviet:france: and latterly Dead Voices On Air and PlatEAU. At times, some tracks threaten to slip into cheap, 'music for whales'-type nonsense you'd find in the World Music sections of high street retailers. But one or two eccentricities, such as Oloolo's "Nano Snoi", awash in a Baltic Sea sinewave endgame, keep the ship afloat. Generally, though, the collection follows a trip hop/mellow Ambient blueprint not too dissimilar to Massive Attack's skeletal bassiness or The Young Gods' *Music For Artificial Clouds*. RICHIE RUCHPAUL

Silver Monk Time: A Tribute To The Monks

PLAY LOUD 2xCD The Monks emerged from a 60s garage band called The Five Torquays, a group made up of American GIs who had been stationed in Germany and were influenced by the British Beat scene that had seemingly taken over the world. After changing their name to The Monks and (for a gimmick) shaving their Beatles styled haircuts into tonsures, they went into the recording studio to produce *Black Monk Time*, an album that has since been given holy grail status by garage rock connoisseurs. The Monks planned a second album to be called *Silver Monk Time* that never happened, but now an army of musicians (including Faust, The Raincoats, Mouse On Mars, Einstürzende Neubauten's Alexander Hacke, The Fall and many others) have joined forces to pay homage to what they still consider to be a special and influential group.

Unlike many tribute projects that fall flat due to those involved being either overawed or ignorant of the original material, *Silver Monk Time* succeeds because the participants have taken the group's primitive rock surge as a template to experiment with. As a result the sound of The Monks is treated to a 21st century workout with synthesizers and beat tracks threaded through the original quartet's already way out psychotic minimalism. Every one of the 29 tracks here has qualities, but some of the stand outs include Alec Empire and Gary Burger's global war update for the band's thematic "It's Monk Time", Mouse On Mars' bump and grind remake of the same (entitled "Momks No Time") that, to these ears, somehow reminds one of John Cage's *Construction (In Metal)* pieces, and Mark E Smith's gloriously raucous psychobilly rendering of "Higgle-dy Piggle-dy" where he sounds as though he has swallowed the microphone in his enthusiasm as the rest of The Fall mercilessly shred their equipment behind him. In the accompanying booklet Smith makes the observation that The Monks sound like a forerunner of Can with an American singer, a notion that might have slipped by the majority of the group's fan base, but one that is nevertheless spot on. EDWIN POUNCEY

Roedelius & Friends

Snapshots/Sidesteps

PSYCHONAVIGATION CD

In a career that spans more than 40 switched-on years, Hans-Joachim Roedelius has taken the opportunity to make many friends, and *Snapshots/Sidesteps*, from Dublin label Psychonavigation, is a testimony to some of them. Marking ten years of collaborations and remixes made between 1995–2005, this album's ten unreleased tracks are drawn from projects with artists including Seiichi Suzuki, David Bickley and The Orb's Alex Paterson and Thomas Fehlmann.

In the history of post-war electronica, Roedelius is one of the great linking figures, joining Fluxus to Eno and the post-Acid House era. If this is a big territory to fill, possibly the best angle on Roedelius is as a musician most interested in process, and this is certainly demonstrated by the vignettes – some sketchy ideas, others more fully formed – released here. "Ad Honorem" (2003) with Suzuki falls into the former category; a sparse drum track with uncertain elements unfolding in the ether; so too "Claire Obscura" (2005) with Patrick Pulsinger and Werner Dafeldecker. This isn't to denigrate the tracks; as on "Juste Milieu", a 1995 offering made with Fabio Capanni, these are moments of imaginative observation, often inspired by organic sounds such as water, birdsong and air currents. As one might expect on a track with The Orb, 2002's "Elektrum" takes on a more dynamic format, as does "Fait Accompli", a 2002 track made with Cluster comrade Werner Moebius and littered with tiny plosive electro-beats and skittery piano. But it is 2003's "Hoc Volo" that carries the album. Made with Timothy O'Keefe, the track sets up an acoustic folk riff with some Aeolian atmospherics to reiterate what it is that Roedelius does best. Lovely.

LOUISE GRAY

Brandon Ross

Puppet

INTOXICATE CD

Costume, New York guitarist Brandon Ross's previous release under his own name, was one of my favourite records of 2005. *Puppet* offers some of the same pleasures. It's beautifully produced, contains wistful songs rendered more wistful still by Ross's tender vocals, there are some intricate instrumentals, well ventilated arrangements and fine playing throughout. Ross is best known for his work with saxophonist Henry Threadgill. He also plays in the power trio Harriet Tubman with electric bassist Melvin Gibbs and drummer JT Lewis, both of whom contribute to *Puppet*.

Among his musical enthusiasms Ross lists Ornette Coleman, Joni Mitchell, Keith Jarrett, Son House, Witold Lutoslawski and Burt Bacharach. The same inclusiveness characterises his music. "South" is a neat contemporary blues – imagine Green Gartside singing a Taj Mahal song and you'll be somewhere in the vicinity. "Cycle" is heavily tinged with Coleman's influence. "Love From Above" translates Jarrett's lyricism to acoustic guitar. "May As Well Know", with Gregoire Maret's expressive harmonica, recalls Mitchell in her mellow, melancholy mode. Yet the way it all falls together sets Ross apart; he draws on other music without being merely derivative.

Indeed there's a danger of his songwriting

becoming too narrowly determined by the smooth and sensitive character of his voice. He favours a reflective pace and plangent melodic shapes and that could become a limiting mannerism. Currently Lewis's inventiveness with time enlivens Ross's introspection. And, as on *Costume*, the programming is important, moderating the shifts of gear and character. It's easy to envisage a cult following for these recordings ten years on. It would be so much better if Ross gets the audience he deserves now.

JULIAN COWLEY

Sandoz Lab Technicians

The Western Lands

LAST VISIBLE DOG CD

They might sound like a team of research chemists, but you're hardly likely to find the kind of drugs the Sandoz Lab Technicians cook up over the counter in your local store. James Kirk, Tim Cornelius and Nathan Thompson, all veterans of New Zealand's ever fertile free rock scene, get busy with a huge variety of instruments, whether conventional (plenty of liquid Fender Rhodes on offer), exotic (North African hand drums, various reed and bamboo flutes) or off the wall (much use is made of water splashing about), all augmented by laptop effects and field recordings.

Unlike the lo-fi production of many previous releases, the 31 minute title track was recorded in quality studio conditions in Sydney, where the group were appearing at a festival of NZ noise music in 2005. The release remains true to The Technicians' no frills, no overdubs, 'take it as it comes' aesthetic. The crystal-clear sound enhances the more skilful passages, adding depth and definition to the rich drones behind the chattering darbouka and sloshing water, while drawing the attention to the odd moments when the music seems to run out of steam, the kind of lapses of attention that card-carrying improvising musicians are all too willing to edit out with a couple of clicks of a mouse.

Even if the peaks – especially the glorious soaring feedback chorale that closes the title track – far outnumber the troughs, it's the latter that make the music so curiously touching. The untutored saxophone squeaks, tremulous harmonica clusters and odd guitar twangs appearing from nowhere somehow make more sense in the less well-recorded pieces that bookend the title track, the spaced out, delay saturated "Nebulous" and the disarmingly naive faux-Oriental pentatonic twiddles of "Crocus Blossom".

DAN WARBURTON

The Sealed Knot

Live At The Red Hedgehog

CONFRONT PERFORMANCE SERIES CD-R

As The Sealed Knot are an occasional group, convening for one-off performances or short tours at far from regular intervals, it's perhaps inevitable that every time the musicians meet they bring something new to the mix, something they've been working on individually. That's the case with their latest release, recorded in late October last year at the Red Hedgehog, a North London venue which mainly programmes 19th century chamber music. The trio's previous release, a 2004 studio recording disarmingly titled *Unwanted Object*, featured trancelike ostinatos

and loosely patterned repetitions that sounded like nothing so much as systems music in the early stages of dreaming itself into being.

On the Red Hedgehog performance, as with *Unwanted Object*, Mark Wastell plays double bass, the instrument on which he began his musical career. The bass bottoms out the sound and its sonorities resonate nicely with the larger drums in Burkhard Beins's kit. Rhodri Davies's extensive harp preparations offer a gamut of sounds including quasi-gamelan percussiveness and long tones generated by E-bowed strings. Drama is established from the outset by fierce arco playing on the double bass, and even when the music speaks in whispers, there's urgency and an underlying tension. The Sealed Knot are developing as a group and finding new musical strategies, and David Reid's recording has captured them in striking detail.

BRIAN MARLEY

Patti Smith

Twelve

COLUMBIA CD

Such is the power and grace that Patti Smith brings to her performance, arguably anything she turns her attention to is worth hearing. If that's true of her own work, then it is equally applicable to *Twelve*, an album of cover versions that coincides with her induction into the Rock 'N' Roll Hall of Fame. While this new tenancy represents an honour that might be judged as somewhat crass, such judgments are neither here nor there. Smith has long been an artist for whom other people's music has offered a route to somewhere unique – Jimi Hendrix's "Hey Joe" or Van Morrison's "Gloria" being cases in point – attempting to describe precisely where it is she goes has occupied successive generations.

Simply, *Twelve* is very much Smith's selection of favourite songs, from the edgy (The Rolling Stones' "Gimme Shelter") to the bathetic (Tears For Fears' "Everybody Wants To Rule The World"). For this project, her regular group are joined by guests including Tom Verlaine, Sam Shepard (the playwright with whom she wrote *Cowboy Mouth* in 1971) and Red Hot Chilli bassist Flea. Even when the performances are predictable, the delivery always surprises. Bob Dylan is out-Dylaned on Smith's magisterial version of "Changing Of The Guards", her voice marking his original in a kind of personal counterpoint. Kurt Cobain hovered as a ghostly presence over Smith's 1996 comeback album, *Gone Again*, and is remembered here in "Smells Like Teen Spirit", a faithful, mainly acoustic take on the track. In the past, Smith has used cover versions as a springboard to launch into the stratosphere of her own words, and it's here where she really soars. She gets high, too, on Hendrix's "Are You Experienced?" and even higher on Jefferson Airplane's "White Rabbit", the latter's clouds of feedback and martial drums carving out a special space for Smith to operate in. And how she takes her chance.

LOUISE GRAY

Starving Weirdos

Shrine Of The Post-Hypnotic

ROOT STRATA CD

A loosely defined Californian group revolving around the core duo of Brian Pyle and Merrick

McKinlay, Starving Weirdos deal in elemental, longform drone improvisations, soaked in reverb and studded with primitive instrumental gestures, connoting, along with the group's unfortunate moniker and album titles like *Father Guru* and *Séance At Luffenhulz*, a pronounced ritualistic bent.

The approach is best summarised by the last track on *Shrine Of The Post-Hypnotic*, their ninth album and their fifth in the first quarter of 2007. The 18 minute "Wartime Sunrise" embeds a limited palette of sounds – whistles, buzzes, a distant percussive pound – in an overarching backdrop of floating drone. The momentum of the playing is sufficiently controlled that the music seems to be in an ongoing state of transition, always on the verge of becoming something else. At its conclusion it actually sounds unfinished – no mean feat. It's vintage Starving Weirdos and the album's strongest track by some way. The remainder fecklessly overemphasises derivative noise-drone guitar, and the title track's field recordings of waves lapping on a shore and seagulls are barely distinguishable from Ambient cliché.

Consequently, this is by no means their best album, and Starving Weirdos are doing themselves no favours with so prolific a release schedule – there's hardly a global shortage of this kind of music, after all. Nonetheless, *Shrine Of The Post-Hypnotic* does about enough to suggest they warrant ongoing monitoring.

NICK CAIN

Sterling

Cursed

FILE 13 CD

Formed in 2000, the Chicago based underground rock quartet Sterling released their debut album *Murderer* in 2002. Although the group aren't as well known as individual members' various other projects, past and present – keyboardist Andy Lansangan with 90 Day Men, bassist Al Burian with Milemarker, and drummer Tony Lazzara with Atombombpocketknife – Sterling are arguably the most interesting.

Like the underrated Glaswegian group Lapsus Linguae, they merge skills learned through a background in classical training with a love of extreme Metal such as Obituary and Slayer. It may sound a shady path to tread, but the result is brilliantly executed. The three epic tracks on this third album reflect a facility for vast, instrumental soundscapes that recall Goblin's soundtrack work for film maker Dario Argento. The apocalyptic images flair open with the shuddering bassline of "Lurker", and slowly drop into a spooky, silvery two note keyboard riff which imbues the piece with nervous, anticipatory energy. Tension builds as the chords twist and intricate melodic segments collide with shattering intensity.

It's not all heavy – beautiful moments leak into the beginning of "Acacia", where plucked guitar lines entwine with sweeping keyboards. Ultimately, Sterling's strength, beside their grandiose arrangements and some stunning melodic work, lies in the emotional power of their music, which often seems fractured and dissassociated until, quite suddenly, every part of the mosaic falls into place.

MIA CLARKE

The Boomerang New reissues: rated on the rebound

Gallon Drunk *Tonite...The Singles Bar*

SARTORIAL CD *You, The Night... And The Music*
SARTORIAL CD *From The Heart Of Town*
SARTORIAL CD Perhaps it's a little unfair to say it, but when James Johnston of Gallon Drunk finally became a paid-up member of The Bad Seeds in 2003, it seemed like a classic case of wish fulfilment. It's difficult to listen to the hulking rock 'n' roll noir that characterises their early singles from 1988–91, collected on *Tonite... The Singles Bar*, without thinking of The Birthday Party's *Junkyard*. They might mine the same musical seam, but there are as many differences as similarities in their respective approaches. Featuring voodoo/Bo Diddley rhythms of ominous low-end bass, tom-tom patterns, maracas and Johnston's eruptions of garish, atonal organ, "Ruby" and "Gallon Drunk" sound particularly mighty. Each of these reissues of their early back catalogue includes a generous helping of extras: in this case eight tracks from a show in Chicago in 1993, where the echoey stage sound complements the cacophonous production on the studio recordings.

For all the Sturm und Drang of that CD, Gallon Drunk actually sound more convincing when more focused, as on 1992's *You, The Night... And The Music* (also known as *Gallon Drunk*). "Some Fool's Mess" is outstanding, a very different type of love song, as Johnston observes with disgust, "Some fool's mess running down your leg". "Two Wings Mambo" wins out through the excitement generated by its relentless momentum, but it also highlights that at times Gallon Drunk's music could become a bit of a splurge, short on tunes and structure: the title track here is a rather half-baked take on swinging jazz. Again, the extras include live tracks and alternate takes, plus a Steve Stapleton mix of "Draggin' Along".

1993's Mercury-nominated *From The Heart Of Town* found saxophonist Terry Edwards adding some throaty skronk, and banjo and strings also feature in the mix. Extras this time include Johnston murdering Neil Sedaka's "Solitaire", the ballad popularised by Andy Williams. Originally viewed as a daunting prospect, these three CDs have been played in steady rotation. A pity that the sleeve information of these extended reissues isn't more detailed. MIKE BARNES

Kevin Drumm *Sheer Hellish Miasma* EDITIONS MEGO CD It would be a bit of a head-scratcher as to the necessity of this remaster, were it only to feature Tina Frank's original artwork revamped by Sunn O))) dronemeister Stephen O'Malley. For it's rather unexceptional. The jet black gatefold cover is intact, with Drumm's initials in golden Gothic font shifted to the top right from the original cover's centre position. Is that it? A two-minute bungle of a job, some might say.

Sheer Hellish Miasma first appeared in 2002, and in hindsight, Drumm's guitar based

textural endeavours provided a foretaste of the current new wave of Americanoise (Control, John Wiese, Bastard Noise, et al). This new version comes with a ten-minute bonus nasty, "Impotent Hummer", recorded at the same time as the 2002 release, which menacingly flatlines a tambura-like drone in the opening minutes. It's not too long before scything blades start protruding from every aperture and all hell is on the cusp of breaking loose. Predictably, the 20 minute "Hitting The Pavement" and ensuing grindsplattering marathon of "The Inferno" remain the pinnacles of this mammoth exercise in telluric intensity and aural symmetric elongation. Both will still have you turning down the volume knob, however much you think your cringing eardrums have acclimated to their sheer sonic density. One presents a wall of static and grainy riff textures that border on the cinematic; the other is a cataclysmic white sheet of schizotronic frequencies and abrasive, splintered circuitry. RICHIE RUCHPAUL

than philosophical, it's pretty clear that the album proper contains the Community's most fully realised material. But the other stuff – concert tracks and a pre-album cassette-only release – is genuinely interesting. And the documentation of their collective history is fascinating. It's worth noting, however, that Hand/Eye will be doing a single CD reissue of *The Christ Tree* in the near future. That one will be essential. BYRON COLEY

Seefeel *Quique (Redux Edition)*

TOO PURE 2xCD The best of the first, superior wave of post-rock, Seefeel obliterated the beginnings and endpoints of the guitar. Their shuddering mosaics of weightless, flickering loops and quietly insinuating rhythms traversed the chasms separating rock, Ambient and electronic music long before Radiohead climbed out of their bunk beds. 1993's *Quique* was Seefeel's debut album and it still sounds staggering, processing the guitar via dub tactics until it becomes a transient, ever-shifting instrument

collective Smegma's back catalogue returns a key collection to the fold. Here the group launch into one of their finest displays of eccentric musicianship, with fractured flurries of free jazz ballooning and bloating from within their arsenal of damaged instruments. Whatever offering is summoned up, however, soon gets shredded between the whirling cogs of Industrialised tape loop, where a disembodied voice from some hokum TV commercial is cut up to form a Burroughsian rant that sounds like a warning from the future. This technique is most effective on "Innermost Cravings", which layers a looped demand for money over a machine shop backing track to create a miniature masterpiece of found sound manipulation.

Harbinger's reissue thoughtfully tucks on an extra nine tracks culled from Smegma's *Morass* cassette, released by Soleilmoon in 1988. Complete with the expected barnyard jazz racket and displaced cartoon Americana soundtrack that the group excel in producing, *Morass* comes alive with several warped rock pieces that sound occasionally like a private homage to The Hampton Grease Band. Supplemented with a booklet that includes a Smegma discography (to 1988), this is a well presented second instalment to a reissue programme that, hopefully, will eventually restore their complete works. EDWIN POUNCEY

Flanger *Nuclear Jazz (Templates/Midnight Sound)* NONPLACE CD In 1997, Atom™ and Burnt Friedman's Flanger collaboration felt quietly revolutionary, their *Templates* album roughly conceptualising a 'small jazz trio' as though it had actually manifested itself directly inside their simplistic equipment – sampler, sequencer and keyboard.

Compiled on *Nuclear Jazz* with its successor, 1999's *Midnight Sound*, *Templates* still packs a lighthearted punch. Atom™ and Friedman never skip out on humour on their records – this school of electronica also produced Señor Coconut, after all – but what impresses most about *Templates* is its intimacy. The tiniest snippets of real-time playing or sampled virtuosity turned inside out and built into exquisite contraptions, an army of robotic jazz musicians who are constantly standing on the verge of getting it wrong, unable to make it past the stuttering stage. A ride cymbal will pixelate into an orchestra of 1000 tiny glitches; slick vibraphone goes queasy at the touch of a defrocked Fender Rhodes. *Midnight Sound* is comparatively less interesting; it's just as amiable, but not as engaging. Both albums risk lapsing into nu-fusion territory on occasion, but the duo thankfully keep that impulse in check. You can tell you're listening to musicians with good ears when something so close to fusion ends up so gleefully incorrect. JON DALE



Trees Community

Trees Community *The Christ Tree* HAND/EYE 4xCD In the pantheon of Christian psych LPs, 1975's *The Christ Tree* by New York's Trees Community is held in high esteem, and rightly so. The album has a captivating Eastern, proto-World Music vibe. It's a bit similar to latterday work by The Incredible String Band, although dedicated to the words of Jesus H Christ rather than L Ron Hubbard. Hand/Eye's Tim Renner has spent the last five years tracking down the group, their history and related recordings, and the results are presented in a lovely package. They began in 1970 on Manhattan's Lower East Side, coalescing around William 'Shipen' Lebzelter. Later, they travelled around the country, performing concerts of "musical meditations" on the nature of Christ's affirmative teachings. If your interest is musical rather

without organs. The group were often acclaimed as the next step after My Bloody Valentine's evacuated song skeletons; it's worth noting that Seefeel were saddled with that tagline while people were still hopeful that Kevin Shields might actually make another record. This 'redux edition' features an extra disc which mostly contains abstractions of album tracks, different versions of "Charlotte's Mouth", "Filter Dub" and "Climactic Phase #3"; it's all completely essential. A similar expanded reissue of their 1993 *Pure, Impure* EP would be very welcome. JON DALE

Smegma *Nattering Naybobs Of Negativity* HARBINGER SOUND CD Originally issued as a vinyl LP in 1987 on the obscure UK label Dead Man's Curve, this long lost treasure from former Los Angeles Free Music Society

Masayuki Takayanagi New Direction For The Art Complete "La Grima"

DOUBTMUSIC CD

Gozo Yoshimasa/Masayuki Takayanagi/Keiki Midorikawa Shibito

JINYA CD

The overdue rehabilitation of Japanese guitarist Masayuki Takayanagi continues apace with this clutch of newly excavated performances. *Complete "La Grima"* contains the entirety of his New Direction group's violently atonal set at the 1971 Genya festival at Sanritsuka, a six minute excerpt of which previously appeared on a compilation. Held to oppose forcible land seizures for the construction of the new international airport for Tokyo, the Genya festival highlighted the schism between traditionalist locals with a specific grievance and radical urban leftists looking for any opportunity to stick it to the man. Takayanagi's typically uncompromising set went down particularly badly with the farmers, who showered the stage with debris and booed them off. But even shorn of historical context, it's a fantastic performance with an explosively engaging opening and enough textural variety to maintain interest across its length. That the trio of Takayanagi, Hiroshi Yamazaki on drums and Kenji Mori on alto were able to sustain this level of interplay given the circumstances is remarkable. The set has been skilfully remastered to bring out the concentrated excitement of Yamazaki's unflagging propulsive energy, Mori's strangely melodic blowing and Takayanagi's wincing spikes of distortion.

Collaborations between poets and jazz musicians are frequently doomed to one-dimensionality, with the music reduced to shading in the background behind verbal grandstanding. Fortunately, the 1984 live collaboration between Takayanagi, versatile free improvising cellist Keiki Midorikawa and acclaimed poet Gozo Yoshimasa captured on *Shibito (The Dead)* is a much more nuanced and dangerous affair. Yoshimasa is renowned for his tranced style of performance poetics, and on the three pieces here he displays a rare willingness to sacrifice linguistic clarity for the sake of group dynamics, modulating his delivery between a haunted blankness and a hyper-accelerated glossolalia. Midorikawa can stab and scrabble at the strings with the best of them, but also brings out deeper bowed resonances, while Takayanagi is in fiercely meta-improvisational mode, attacking the logic of the words with chains across the strings and densely inventive tape collages.

ALAN CUMMINGS

Tarentel Ghetto Beats On The Surface Of The Sun (Volumes 1–4)

MUSIC FELLOWSHIP 4xLP

San Francisco space rock group Tarentel have always been prolific but this four volume suite of LPs is their grandest statement to date. Over eight sides Tarentel have melded their post-rock heritage with their psychedelic instincts to create a sonic journey across the universe.

Each side has its own feel and groove, but the whole enterprise is bracketed by two vast slabs of sound: the opening "Everybody Fucks With Somebody" on Volume 1 and the

mirroring "Somebody Fucks With Everybody" on Volume 4. These both build like the slow spread of earthlight creeping across the deepest moon crater, gilding the grey of moon dust from one monochrome to another. On the latter, a solitary high-pitched feedback signal whines to itself, as clumsy as the first splitting of the first cells in the simplest dumb life to emerge in this arid waste. When the splenetic lunar tribal drums cut in, it is an ecstatic moment like the first flight of the first bird or the first eye to open on a dawn on any planet.

The collective fantasy of space travel is so well imagined and the titles of these tracks draw so freely from those imaginings (as do the wonderful collages on the sleeves) that it is impossible not to experience the music in these terms. The dreamier tracks on Volume 1, particularly "All Things Vibrations", made of quiet, echoing toms and a haunting melodica, paint a vivid picture of planetescapes hued in purples and deep reds. The track is suddenly cracked in half by low-frequency rumbles with the menace of solar flares and magnetic storms tearing though a landing capsule. In the aftermath there's the clean electric strum of "Ghetto Ghosts", a signal sent out into the void hoping to one day reach home.

Volume 2 is dominated by "Tied To A Tree In A Jungle Of Mystery". A dub-pattered rhythm moves under and over wind sounds before spreading out in the dawn of a bright organ chord, each pulse towards the infinite gestured by an orchestral crescendo build, as all the while the whole melds into the fecund, verdant churn and chaos of an alien jungle's fierce blossoming of extraterrestrial life. Volume 3 is made of fuzz-fluttering nebula and collapsing stars as on "A Crystal The Size Of Our Moon In The Heart Of A Pulsating White Dwarf" or the fluxing chord, coda of stressed harmonics and death-rattle feedback of "Mirrors, Garden". With more than two and a half hours of music, Tarantel's Jefre Cantu-Ledesma, Danny Grody, Jim Redd and Tony Cross emphatically earn their wings as rock star cosmonauts.

NICK SOUTHGATE

Tarwater Spider Smile

MORR MUSIC CD

Berlin duo Tarwater are Ronald Lippok of To Rococo Rot and Bernd Jestram. On their last album, 2005's *The Needle Is Travelling*, they began to expand their mostly instrumental electronic sound towards a form of hypnotic, abstract pop, washed with deadpan vocals and fragments of spoken word monologues. Their sixth album *Spider Smile* continues in a similar direction, and reveals a finely honed marriage of styles.

The album jumps all over the place in terms of ideas, yet it hangs together remarkably well. Tracks such as "World Of Things To Touch" and "A Marriage In Belmont" almost stray into Jesus & Mary Chain territory when Lippok's vocals kick in, but there's a harder, sleazier electro feel to the opening "Shirley Temple". "Roderick Usher" has a beautiful sub-aquatic glow, its lonesome guitar and shimmering electronic glitches like a dive into black waters as light fades in the distance.

Jestram and Lippock have also begun to utilise acoustic instruments, and the juxtaposition of their programmed creations with violin, oboe and analogue synths has

opened the pair up to a wealth of possibilities. The wonderful "Arkestra", with its slide guitar and samples of twittering birds, is the closest that Tarwater have ever sounded to a Country group, the inspiration for which was a bus trip through Scotland with The Sun Ra Arkestra. Opinions about North America are a focal point elsewhere, particularly on "When Love Was The Law In Los Angeles", where the addition of xylophone adds a little wink of dry humour.

If *Spider Smile* is easily Tarwater's most accessible recording to date, it's also their most adventurous. They still create songs out of modulating electronic sounds born in the recording studio, but the inclusion of new instruments has deepened and expanded their textures, from which they weave a beautiful web of unexpected variety.

MIA CLARKE

Thilges

La Double Absence

STAUBGOLD CD

Thilges – the Viennese trio previously known as Thilges 3 – have expanded their line-up for *La Double Absence*. Armin Steiner, Gammon and Nik Hummer, whose instrumentation consists principally of analogue synthesizers, are joined by celebrated oud player Asim Al-Chalabi, vocalist Zohreh Jooya and a small cast of supporting players including Franz Hautzinger (trumpet) and Eyyind Kang (viola). When Thilges formed in 1996, their interest was in performances tailored to specific environments, which they documented in a series of mini-CDs. Their interest in sound art, installations and what they term 'social acoustics' may be as strong as ever, but *La Double Absence* is something else – a studio album that rather selfconsciously marries Arabic music with electronica.

Al-Chalabi composed all of the pieces with Thilges, and what they've come up with is flexible maqam melodies grafted onto occasionally rather stiff synthesizer generated rhythms. The resulting soft-focus pieces are well crafted and undeniably pretty but not particularly satisfying. A useful comparison is *Heavy Cairo Traffic*, the 1995 CD that Hans Koch, Martin Schütz and Freddy Studer made with the Egyptian traditional group El Nil Troop, in which the clash of musical cultures, and the difficult compromises the musicians were obliged to make, produced uneasy but thrilling results. Thilges and Al-Chalabi have smoothed out or ignored the considerable differences between the Arabic and Western musical systems, not to mention the cultural ones, and in the process seem to have lost much that is meaningful. *La Double Absence* indeed.

BRIAN MARLEY

Times New Viking

Present The Paisley Reich

SILTBREEZE CD

With sweet tunes, gloriously distorted production from former Guided By Voices engineer Mike 'Rep' Hummel, smart lyrics traded by girl/boy vocals, this second album from Ohio trio Times New Viking is the same as the first, only breezier, shorter, punchier. Frequent reference points are Swell Maps and Pavement, allusions made plausible by catchy hooks and a comet's trail of electricity.

Times New Viking's jagged rhythms sound distinctly contemporary, however: a looser,

noisier take on the longstanding keyboard revival in US punk rock (see, for example, Dirtnap Records' greatest moments) and the resurgence of the Devo-esque seesaw pummel. Casually bashing out recycled tunes with a 'hot' guitar sound, though, is a surefire formula that has been a benchmark since Willie Kizart's guitar set fire to "Rocket 88", Jackie Brenston's 1951 rehash of the Jimmy Liggins record "Cadillac Boogie". "Little amps will find ways to blow your mind," sing the Viking, and they're right.

JON BYWATER

David Torn

Prezens

ECM CD

Guitarist, composer and producer David Torn is a master of both technology and his instrument. This album finds him fronting a pre-existing group: Tim Berne's Hard Cell (with Berne on alto sax, keyboardist Craig Taborn, and drummer Tom Rainey). There's a longstanding friendship and musical relationship at work here – Torn has produced, mixed or mastered several albums for Berne's various ensembles.

All four players are working in extremely tight mental sync, at least in the parts where you can hear what was actually being played. The rest of the time, Torn performs radical reconstructive surgery on the music, which emerges like a man with a third leg and extra arms in the middle of his back who still manages to dance like Fred Astaire.

The opening cut, "Ak", is a laptop-era blues, with Torn chunking out wiry, Steve Copper-esque lines before erupting in a manner akin to Gary Smith's 'stereo guitar' pieces, or Rene Akhan's work with Burnt Sugar. For most of the album, though, he plays in a subdued, Bill Frisell-like style, while the music is relentlessly shredded, chittering and clicking away in a mass of glitches and whooshes. Passages Torn likes are looped, stuttered and layered; aside from a few, brilliant unaltered solos from Berne, the group performance is simply fodder for the later electronic shredding. But bravo to Torn for getting his hands dirty.

PHIL FREEMAN

David Tudor

Music For Piano

EDITION RZ 2xCD

David Tudor has always seemed a musician beyond reproach; a phenomenally able pianist who refused to play safe and instead donated that ability to the cause of the adventuresome avant garde. His virtuosity and dedication to scrupulous interpretation conferred a necessary kind of authority to the unorthodox scores of the New York School. Music written half a century ago sounds still, in his readings, daring and strange and utterly convincing. This marvellous collection features mainly compositions for piano by John Cage, but also work by Christian Wolff and Morton Feldman, and a piece written for Tudor by Italian radical Sylvano Bussotti.

Performing work that makes a virtue of indeterminacy, Tudor eliminates any hint of equivocation. His actions appear definitive even when framed by awareness that they are provisional. His interpretations of Cage's *Music For Piano, Variations I* and *Winter Music* are gripping dramas of concentration and

involvement. *Variations II* is delivered with a wonderfully grungy coating of raw electronic distortion, signalling the way forward for Tudor as he developed into a robust electroacoustic composer. Cage is heard in duet with Tudor on several pieces including three versions of Wolff's *Duo I* and Feldman is one of the participants in his own *Piece For Four Pianos*.

Music For Piano ends with a brief verbal statement from Tudor himself: "... where I'm called upon to make actions, and especially if the actions are undetermined as to their content... then I feel that I'm alive in every part of my consciousness." That transmits.

JULIAN COWLEY

Ultra-red An Archive Of Silence/ The Minutes Various

The Minutes International

PUBLIC RECORD DOWNLOAD

Ultra-red occupy a place somewhere between sound art, music and political militancy, and Public Record (www.publicrec.org) is an Internet based "archive of audio actions" performed by the group and their allies. These documents use voice, that supposed guarantor of presence, to speak of what is absent: the dead, but also 'spectres of Marx', collapsed political movements, lost utopian longings, the disintegrated public space itself. Ultra-red see no contradiction between militancy and art, and the aim here is neither clear communication nor the production of a record that is 'faithful'.

While there is no concession to populism, it does not follow that the Public Record material is punitively unlistenable. Voices are chopped, reverbed, looped, overlapped, and these three releases, forming part of Ultra-red's AIDS Uncanny series of activities, sound like Glenn Gould's *The Idea Of North* remixed by The Bomb Squad. *An Archive Of Silence* begins with a de-Acidified take on Mr Fingers's "Can You Feel It?", a version so insubstantial and translucent that it seems more like a ghost of the original than a cover version. The rest of the release is made up of a series of site recordings and 'conceptual propositions' connected with the history of AIDS activism.

The Minutes is constructed from reflections on the AIDS crisis recorded by audience members at a series of performances given by Ultra-red in 2005. Its companion piece, *The Minutes International*, was produced to coincide with the XVI International AIDS conference in Toronto in 2006, and includes the work of Toronto electronic artists such as Reena Katz, Scott Kerr, Isabelle Noel, Sandro Perri and Andrew Zealley. The repeated injunction on the opening track is "Wake up!" On the face of it, there is a tension between this barked imperative and the oneiric form of the tracks themselves, whose lulling drift contrasts with the often horrific content of the recorded accounts. But this seductiveness of electronic texture allows the harrowing and angry material to gradually seep into the listener's awareness, as if the record is a bad dream you want to keep recurring.

Cage's 4'33" haunts all these releases. Ultra-red take Cage's claim (heard at the end of *An Archive Of Silence*) that "this is the kind of music anyone can make, all you have to do

is listen" as the model for both sound production and political activism. This is hauntology and the spectres remind us: if something is to happen, we must make it happen.

MARK FISHER

Alan Vega

Station

BLAST FIRST CD

Listening to the latest solo broadcast from righteously paranoid Suicide frontman Alan Vega, one wonders whether he's been ingesting the more politically motivated end of US film maker John Carpenter's oeuvre. More than once he echoes the revelatory ramblings of the resistance fighters in 1988's *They Live* – a film which lays the blame for rampant consumerism and the widening gap between the haves and the have-nots squarely at the feet of enterprising extra-terrestrials; and on "Station Station", Vega's heavily filtered vocals sound like he's delivering a warning from the future, much like that transmitted via dreams in Carpenter's 1987 tech-horror curio *Prince Of Darkness*. However, his panicked assertion that it has now "become a crime to dream" suggests, chillingly, that the devil is already in our midst.

Station features some of the most visceral music Vega has ever put his name to, his wired, wily voice taking centre stage amidst a recalcitrant snarl of relentlessly abrasive electronic beats and textures. Of course, he has always exhibited a keen awareness of the powers of horror; "Frankie Teardrop" from Suicide's 1977 debut is constantly cited as a seminal shock-rock moment, and like his recent work, it percolates with a terror deeper than that of mere grand guignol. Arriving soon after the climax of the Vietnam War, that song can be interpreted as both a bloody post-war requiem and an admission of collective guilt, confirmed by the closing shriek of "We're all Frankies/We're all lying in Hell." The blood, suggests Vega, is on all our hands. *Station's* message is a resolutely post-Iraq one; the stain is spreading.

JOSEPH STANNARD

Venetian Snares

Pink + Green

SUBLIGHT CD

This new mini-album from Venetian Snares, the production alter ego of Winnipeg's Aaron Funk, is all about the joy of mutant hybrids, from the moment the title track's garbled vocal comes in. The effect is something like The Residents set loose after an Amen break crash course.

The clue is in the Jake and Dinos Chapman-like cover art: tattooed My Little Ponies, stuck with syringes, mounting each other in a landscape of acid-bright colours. A polymorphous perversity is also detectable in "Sporto Fucking Sellout Cocksluckerface" a repetition-averse splattering of rhythm and sound. On "Husikam Rave Dojo", the absurdist MDMA jauntiness of dayglow electric piano will spark recognition in anyone who remembers the days when sets of Hardcore rave tapes were sold in big plastic packs.

The Old School Hardcore is fragmented by drillcore techniques from later in the same decade and a Biggie Smalls sample which gradually de-filters: "Get fucked up/Take drugs/Smoke crack rock." Maybe Pink + Green is

another manifestation of the current nostalgia for Hardcore, another wave of the posited 'new rave'. But just as Klaxons' attempt at a fluorescent futurism falters, their Happy Hardcore memories buried under the sinewy but tired sound of the prevailing post-punk/dance formula, Aaron Funk is looking back through AFX- and Squarepusher-tinted lenses. At the micro level the shuddering interplay of snare, kick, bass and synth – especially in "Nutimik" – is immaculately marshalled; which is no more than you'd expect from Venetian Snares. But at the macro level *Pink + Green* feels distinctly behind the times.

SAM DAVIES

Wilco

Sky Blue Sky

NONESUCH CD

Following the Grammy Award winning success of their 2004 album *A Ghost Is Born*, Wilco took a couple of years out, in the interim releasing one live set, the double disc *Kicking Television*, which documented an impressive show in frontman Jeff Tweedy's hometown of Chicago in 2005. For their sixth studio album *Sky Blue Sky*, Wilco have augmented their four piece line-up with the permanent addition of two touring members, the multi-instrumentalist Pat Sansone and guitarist Nels Cline.

Cline is one of the best things to have happened to Wilco, his improvisational style bringing some spontaneity to the group's slick MOR sound on recent material. Recorded at their studio in Chicago, *Sky Blue Sky* was apparently one of Tweedy and Wilco's most positive recording experiences. The vocalist's lyrics tend to focus on personal change, and during the Country lit of "Sky Blue Sky", he reflects "This rotten time wouldn't seem so bad to me now/I survived, and that's good enough for now" – perhaps a comment on Wilco's well-documented troubled past. Either way, it's a sign that *Sky Blue Sky* is a step forward for Wilco. It can feel too polished at times – there are no real surprises here – but it has its share of strong moments.

MIA CLARKE

Tatsuya Yoshida & Piotr Zabrodzki

Karakany

VIVO CD

Daimonji

I'm Getting Sentimental Over You

TONE INDUSTRIA CD

Surely one of the most exciting drummers on the planet, Tatsuya Yoshida from Japanese duo Ruins here lets rip on contrasting albums for two Warsaw labels. *Karakany* is a duo with young pianist Piotr Zabrodzki recorded in Warsaw, comprising 16 rapidfire tracks crammed into a hectic 40 minutes.

This is a jazz record, albeit a fire-belching monster among jazz records. However much Zabrodzki flits from fanfare to tremolo to rock riff, he still demonstrates an improvisor's aversion to repetition. God knows how, but he also plays bass – a synth with his toes? – while Yoshida vocalises into a distortion machine. As hurtling rackets go, this one is richer and denser than most. Yoshida's improvisations suggest a musician primarily interested in composition – his heroes are Magma and This Heat's Charles Hayward – and the music is

always highly organised and far from abstract. Always expounding one idea or moving to the next one, it charges forward with telepathic togetherness. An exhilarating album.

Daimonji is an avant Prog supergroup, if you will: Yoshida on drums with Nasuno Mitsuru (Altered States and Ground Zero) on bass, and one-man musical underground Hoppy Kamiyama on keyboards. These are live recordings from Kyoto and Tokyo, and the detail of Yoshida's playing is even clearer than on *Karakany*. The trio tirelessly pile up structures of almost symphonic girth, pulling off another dazzling feats of bravura Prog recklessness, yet always with tongue in cheek and twinkle in eye. There's no hint of jazz here – Kamiyama prefers gospel organ, stupid synth squelches or furious sequenced keyboards, and he and Yoshida also erupt into banshee vocal duels. "Posa Nova" is sublimely complex, while "Talking Havah Nagilah" is a joyous rampage. The group name Daimonji is lifted from a Kyoto fire festival, in which an enormous Kanji symbol is lit up on a hillside, and *I'm Getting Sentimental Over You* is indeed an extravagant blaze.

CLIVE BELL

The Young Gods

Super Ready/Fragmenté

PLAY IT AGAIN SAM CD

The Young Gods' vocalist Franz Treichler has said that this album draws its dark energies from what he sees as an increasingly unchecked and violent society. The cover depicts what looks like a gun wrapped in rhinestone-like bejewelled fabric, or, if you squint, the very galaxy itself. Violence has always been with us and always will be, and it's this sense of elemental permanence, as well as the micro/macro ambiguity of this cover, that is actually closer to what The Young Gods, now 22 years old, are about. As this storming album confirms, their creative wellsprings have been replenished rather than diminished with age.

After the more liquid, hallucinogenic tendencies of their recent work, *Super Ready/Fragmenté* boots up with a return to the artfully contrived granite aggression of their early days, with "I'm The Drug" and "Freeze" issuing a machine driven volley of sampled guitar. The Young Gods have an ultramodern architectural take on rock, exposing its stone origins but also bending its girders at new angles. The deep, charcoal bass rumble of "C'est Quoi C'est Ca" indicates how effectively and incrementally they have upgraded since their 1987 debut. You can't see the joins in their assemblage nowadays. "Stay With Us" offers a passage of psychedelic respite, borne spaceward on a glistening drift of refracted sitar and impossible ambitions: "Who's gonna paint the clouds?"

From here on, the album charts an evolutionary process. "Everythere" makes the 2001: A Space Odyssey connection between apes and space, while the title track traces the links between the third, second and first stones from the sun, emitting Ra-like bubbles of abstract synth from its exhaust. Appropriately, "Un Point C'est Tout" pays oblique homage to Hendrix, rock's own sun god, with its isolated, wah-wah space noodling. As ever, The Young Gods rebirth rock music.

DAVID STUBBS

Avant Rock Reviewed by Tom Ridge

Baikal

Baikal

IMPORTANT CD

Bardo Pond guitarists John and Michael Gibbons and bassist Clint Takeda take time out from their day jobs to cover some rugged terrain in two epic workouts totalling more than an hour of opaque fuzz, wah-wah and guttural drone-riffs. It's not that big a departure from Bardo Pond's signature sound, but in ignoring the impulses that would normally shape their monolithic improvisations into neater songs, they become fully immersed in the immense tidal surge of the noise. The first track, "I Forgot", is basically an epic psychedelic blues piece, primitive but dynamically volatile, adorned with Takeda's hoarse bellow and driven along by his throbby bass and drummer Jason Kourkonis's kinetic energy. "Hanafuda" is relatively subtler, building from submerged doodles into a wild, flailing storm of intensity, then easing back into lurching fuzz riffs and an undulating bass pulse. It's sometimes verging on outright stoner indulgence, but the group's intuitive interplay maintains the sort of focus to keep things on track.

Debate

Debate

AMPLITUDE CD

Emerging from the remains of Brazilian math rockers Diagonal, this dryly monickered trio take the throaty guitar riffs and rock-solid surfaces of hard rock and Metal and twist them into hyperactively protean forms. Thankfully there's little of math rock's less appealing qualities – tiresome endurance testing and monodimensional bludgeoning – and instead an attempt to merge melodic guitar textures with staccato brutality and a thundering rhythm section. The results are mixed but never dull. Portuguese speakers will be able to fully appreciate the group's lyrics, though in essence the music is what dominates this short, sharp missive.

Hubcap City (From Belgium)

Superlocalhellfreakride

XERIC CD

From Atlanta, actually, with a pick 'n' mix scattering of primitive communal noise freakouts, field recordings and raw urban folk songs. Centred around the creative partnership of Bill Taft and Will Fratesi, Hubcap City transpose Tom Waits-style neo-Beat culture onto a modernist, dystopian urban setting and explore its nooks and crannies with a roving, surreal eye. The sound is predominantly acoustic, and it's roughly coloured with trumpet, saw and rudimentary percussion. It's delivered with a rawness bordering on the disposable but small lyrical gems are memorably caught in a freeze frame: "I am not a stalker, I came to fix the mirror"; "Drinking down ghetto Kool-Aid"; "He let her down, like free love, Nietzsche and birth control". It's compelling in spite of, or even partly because of, its sloppiness and inconsistency – existing on the margins, mirroring its subject matter.

Kammerflimmer Kollektief

Jinx

STAUBGOLD CD/LP

German Thomas Weber's solo project turned group outing is now six albums old, and this latest effort is a curious mixture of Western soundtrack (à la Calexico) and experimental electronica, epic soundscapes dotted with detailed intricacy. Guest player Martin Siewert (of Trapist and numerous other collaborations) plays a vital supporting role, contributing pedal and lap steel guitar. Only the closing track "Subnarkotish" sounds a jarring note in an otherwise fluid succession of pieces, from the focused linearity of "Palimpsest" and the plaintive waltz of "Live At The Cactus Tree Motel" to the stripped down sound of "Gammier, Zen & Hohe Berge" and "Both Eyes Shut". Only at the album's finish do the group abandon their rhythmic base, instead opting for an atmospheric, textural combination of quivering strings, electronic drones and muffled Ambient hiss.

Kirsten Ketsjer The Rock Band

Ffffoo K Tssch

YOYOYOY CD

This Danish experimental trio ricochet with pinball volatility between loping, jangly guitar grooves, fragile folk ballads, absurdist sketches and experimental noise. What is lacking, despite individually strong moments, is any sense of overriding purpose or specific identity. The laconic art rock of "The Bridge", which travels from jangly Modern Lovers style narrative into a welter of abstract noise and back out again, is an impressive way to start out, but proves a tough act to follow. After the jazzily interwoven guitars of "How Is Your Sleep" the album takes a dip in quality as the songs become nonsense poems and the music descends into tediously selfconscious experimentation. Audibly the group run out of steam way before the finish.

Lichens

Omnis

KRANKY CD+DVD

Chicago based musician Rob Lowe plays in TV On The Radio and his own group 90 Day Men, as well as being a member of Rhys Chatham's touring Guitar Trio. But in his solo alter ego, Lichens, his music takes on a very personal, if not spiritual, hue. Using overlapping loops of his falsetto voice alongside spiralling guitar melodies and sparse piano accompaniment, Lowe produces beautiful epics of droning mystery which extend into a kind of devotional intensity. The album itself is near perfect in its evocation of contrasting, but sympathetic musical scenarios, from choral drones to searing, isolated guitar patterns, all delivered with a kind of undemonstrative intensity. The accompanying performance DVD, recorded at the Empty Bottle in Chicago, is a stunning record of Lowe's subtle live alchemy, wherein he begins with solo electric guitar but then, using real-time vocal overdubs, ascends to a summit of hypnotic abstraction which gets

pretty damn close to the multitracked vocal acrobatics of Tim Buckley's "Jungle Fire".

Pantaleimon

Cloudburst

DURTRONANA CD

Andria Degens is based in Hastings, southern England, but the sparse clarity of her music as Pantaleimon seems to exist in its own unique, indefinable space. Three of these four tracks are crystalline instrumentals played on Appalachian dulcimer and bouzouki with a brittle, graceful sense of mood and spatial atmosphere. This is a kind of minimalist instrumental folk with spiritual undertones. The fourth track, "Numinosum", is sung by Degens with a quietly centred intensity, somewhere between love song and devotional mantra, with a sedate, droning backing. Its vivid simplicity is, in its own quiet way, quite stunning.

Pimentola

Misatronpolis

COLD MEAT INDUSTRY CD

Finnish outfit Pimentola's gloomy symphonic sound veers on the edge of self-parody from the start. An immense wave of massed choral and orchestral samples is backed by huge percussion, thereafter evolving into a full-blown folly of epic proportions, like an extended series of variations on Black Sabbath's "Supertar". However, amid the hammy air of menace and massive tympani crescendos there are moments of diverting juxtaposition – "Wann Endet Die Zeit?" takes rigid totalitarian grandiosity and cheekily mixes it up with muezzin-style cries and rippling Eastern percussion. The symphonic element eventually gives up too much ground to rather humdrum Industrial Techno, but there's definitely the impression that interesting things are happening beneath the grandstanding.

Rameses III

Honey Rose

IMPORTANT CD

As the soundtrack to a film, *Suitymen*, this short collection of six instrumentals from Londoners Rameses III works independently on its own terms. But it also demonstrates a thematic consistency woven into its warm, Ambient lyricism, which gives it a powerful narrative impulse. Much of this music consists of softened tonalities and dappled guitar shades but its languor conceals a purposeful progression, which emerges as the music's individual themes slowly knit together into an identifiable, if mutable, whole. As an instrumental cycle it sounds fully realised, its brevity contributing to its dreamlike vividness.

Stylus

Listen, Time Passes

STYLUS RECORDING COMPANY CD

The inaugural release on Welshman Dafydd Morgan's own label collects various previously unreleased tracks and rarities from his

recording history as Stylus, including music originally produced for Serbian radio sessions and a fanzine. It all fits together well, though the opening bass twang of "Angle" and the motorik electronica of "Coracle" are red herrings when set against the experimental grit and abstract oscillations which follow. There's an interesting recontextualisation of Dylan Thomas's *Under Milk Wood*, in three separate parts spread over the album, which sounds alternately affecting and strangely menacing, with Richard Burton's original narration prey to a series of viral sonic disturbances. It sounds torn between being an affectionate nod to Morgan's own heritage and a playful deconstruction of it.

Textile Ranch/Charles Atlas

Split CD

STATIC CARAVAN CD

Textile Ranch is a predominantly electronic project from Piano Magic lynchpin Glen Johnson. It sounds oddly weightless, with its tinkling music box chimes, tinny snare beats and cascades of synth notes. The various loops and pared back sounds merge into darting, flitting pocket melodies, with guest vocals from Susanne Bauszat on the quivering fragile "Murderer/Gardener". The absence of any low end leaves it sounding thin and, at times, rather niggling. New Yorkers Charles Atlas are a duo whose rhythmic layering of rippling electronic percussion, stately piano and isolated guitar chimes contrasts markedly with the brittle persistence of Textile Ranch. "Oakland" spreads out in slow, inexorable waves, its opening drone transforming into a gentle, melodic surge, which peaks then slowly devolves back into abstract noise. The second and final Charles Atlas track is "Genova", which is gentler and less compelling as it slowly unfurls with a gentle inevitability.

Valet

Blood Is Clean

KRANKY CD

Valet is Portland musician Honey Owens, a sometime collaborator with Jackie-O Motherfucker and Maximum Rock 'N' Roll contributor. This debut release is as loose and vital as JOMF in full flow, a beguiling, meandering combination of trancelike chants, pulsating drones and frazzled guitar doodles. Frequently it sounds utterly liquid, tantalisingly elusive, and then it hits with a series of minor sonic epiphanies, small textural moments which land with exquisite impact but are then submerged beneath further waves of amorphous activity. It almost sounds as though Owens stumbles upon these moments serendipitously, then works through them without lingering too long in any one sonic space, or wishing to settle for a particular mood. The climactic mantric Om drone and echo-wash of noise on "North" seem to mark a final settling down for this album's restlessness, a fittingly impressive sign-off hovering in some cavernous void. □

Critical Beats Reviewed by Dave Stelfox

Bass Clef

Opera EP

BLANK 12"

Uninterested in state-of-the-art clarity and perfectionism, Hackney's Ralph Cumber does for dubstep something akin to what Squarepusher did for drum 'n' bass. Resisting the glossy allure of the latest plug-ins and instead opting for a Heath Robinson studio set-up consisting of a four-track recorder, vintage synths, samplers and valve compressors, he channels dubstep through distortion and brittle, stumbling rhythms. It's easy to wonder precisely what the point of such a venture is, but as is often the way – artists such as Matthew Herbert being cases in point – these arbitrary restrictions are precisely what define the work. Over three tracks ("Cannot Be Straightened", "Opera" and "Don't Ask Me To Forgive You"), a rickety, corroded and anachronistic quality becomes increasingly evident. It's a reimagining of British street music with a wonky, organic feeling that suggests a wild-eyed inventor fashioning magical contraptions out of junk in his garden shed, or a stack of dusty old library records being remixed by the staff of Rinse FM.

Benga

Crunked Up

TEMPA 12"

Back in the day Benga and Skream, both artists on Croydon's Big Apple Records, were new bloods bravely moving UK Garage into hitherto uncharted areas. Now, they're established elder statesmen, despite still being in their twenties. While over recent years artists such as Digital Mystikz and Shackleton have pushed dubplate deeper and denser with every step, "Crunked Up" harks back to earlier times, haunted by a ghostly swing and referencing the breakbeat-led productions of the likes of Sheffield's Oris Jay. Mingling spiky hi-hats, crunching drums and metallic synth lines with a rounded dubwise undertow, it's an astonishingly effective piece of work, infectious enough to appeal to pop sensibilities yet with the subtlety to please the most serious of heads. Walloping from the speakers, then breaking down into absolute silence, it toys with the listener, making you wait expectantly for the next bass drop. Meanwhile, "Electro Music" and the woozy, hiphop-paced "Skunk Tip" occupy more restrained territory, submerging their rhythms fathoms deep, building a sense of immersion as palpable as the exuberance of the lead track.

Tam Cooper

Galactica

SIMPLE 12"

Better known as a member of breakbeat act Precision Cuts, this foray into Techno by Tam Cooper is a pleasant surprise. Stripped down and pivoting around a driving combination of kicks and snares, it's unassuming yet powerful enough to belie considerable skill. Everything is in the right place, each individual sound as full and crisp as can be. As for the remixes, Jamie Odell's Jimster mix provides the main

attraction. It takes a special gift to make a drone move, let alone swing, but that's exactly what his version of "Galactica" does. Transforming the original track's functional percussion into graceful, glitzy space disco that weaves around a gravity-defying synth line, it avoids the faux-improvisational fussiness that makes the majority of jazz-influenced dance music so unbearable. Instead, this is flawless and sophisticated House music that never loses sight of its purpose.

Count Of Monte Cristal

Ghetto Bitches EP

COUNTERFEET 12"

An aptly named EP on Counterfeet records, even without the Lil' Kim sample of the title track. Not exactly the funky house now clogging up London pirate radio, the Count of Monte Cristal's take on 4/4 dance music is fat, bouncy and calculatedly rough-edged. Reminiscent of old school Speed Garage with a 21st century twist, the real action is to be found in the basslines, which strike a balance between saw-toothed and enveloping. This continues in the extra cuts "Pussy Suck" and "Let's Do It". While it won't win any awards for political rectitude, it's hardly surprising that label co-owner Graeme Sinden has found inspiration in the scuffed-up funk of Dancemania-style booty business. Tinny, repetitive and clearly in debt to DJ Deon, it's all the things such a tune should be – jacking, filthy and irresistible.

Hot Chip

DJ Kicks

!K7 CD

Looking about as cool as your average bloggers' convention, Hot Chip still manage to make the kind of pop that is perennially relevant. At once touching and humorous, knowing and naive, it's music that sounds entirely natural dropping references to Yo La Tengo and David Banner in the same breath. More than anything, though, 2004's *Coming On Strong* and 2006's *The Warning* demonstrated the group's gift for making people smile and dance. These talents are much in evidence on the latest instalment of Studio K7's *DJ Kicks* series. Refusing to be shackled by good taste or simple continuity, it's a haphazard and endearingly eclectic set of songs. From Positive K's "I Got A Man" through Young Leek's "Jiggle It" and Joe Jackson's "Steppin' Out", pretty much every party-starting base is covered, but it's smarter than your average college crush tape, too. In amongst all the good time vibes come interludes by Tom Zé and This Heat, not to mention a boshing uptempo peak running from Wookie's "Far East" to Roman Flügel's concussive rework of Dominik Eulberg's "Just Fucking".

Lopazz

Share My Rhythm

GET PHYSICAL 12"

Hardly minimal, but in no way maximal, Lopazz's new EP for Get Physical contains

three drastically different grooves. Opening up, the soulful Techno of the title track sets a mood of balmy summer nights spent dancing under the stars, its tenderly propulsive bassline dappled with keys that chirrup like crickets in trees. Next come the slippery rhythms and impatient vocal stabs of "Gimme Gimme". While both are clever enough to satisfy the sort of person who's happy to listen to a whole evening of understated Techno, neither are going to change your world. For that you have to jump to the B-side. Here Rajko Muller, alias Isolée, rips the heart out of the lead song, replacing the blissed out harmonies with brooding synth riffs and hazy, echoing voices. Despite its initial sense of opiate menace, like much of this producer's work, this remix rewards the patient, the gentle melodies of the original gradually emerging out of the shadows like shafts of early morning sun.

Mala

Changes/Forgive

DEEP MEDI MUSIK 12"

Newly liberated from Digital Mystikz' vaults, this archive release shows exactly why Mala and partner Coki have become beloved figureheads of London's underground. "Changes" was initially heard in 2004, but it's now available to the many recent converts to their sound. Opening with an undulating sample that's barely recognisable as a human voice, it slowly builds into a sparse palette of burbling tribal rhythms that seem to exist solely as a textural counterpoint to a bassline so sumptuous it's easy to notice very little else. Despite marking a significant step away from the two-step rooted skip of artists such as El-B and Horsepower Productions, a couple of elements key to dubstep's initial incarnation remain: a genuine sense of warmth and a joy in sonic intricacy. This carries through to the flipside, with the brooding pianos and echo-chamber vocals of "Forgive" sounding like broken beat taken to a futuristic dystopia far south of the river.

Ruff Sqwad

From A Place

ADAMANTIUM 12"

Ghetto

Top 3 Selected

ADAMANTIUM 12"

Fresh out on Kiss FM DJ and scene kingpin Logan Sama's Adamantium label, "From A Place" and "Top 3 Selected" show Grime at its most powerful and clearly realised. In many ways, that's thanks to the sparkling backing tracks, both courtesy of Ruff Sqwad's in-house producer Rapid. Contrary to the fulsome instrumental pressure of dubstep, this is music custom made for voicing. Instead of filling space with shifting walls of liquid bass, the emphasis is on bristling hi-hats, swirling string samples and percussive slaps, giving vocals room to breathe. While essentially following the same rhythmic blueprint, the difference between the tracks is how the MCs approach the beats. Ruff Sqwad – comprised of Tinchy

Styler, Shifty Rydos, Slix, Fuda Guy and Dirty Danger – in no way lack grit, but nonetheless convey an approachable and contagious sense of enthusiasm and energy. As heard on their 2006 mixtape *Guns N Roses Volume 2*, this crew are at the height of their powers and are intent on demonstrating their star qualities. Ghetto, meanwhile, is just plain frightening, his quick-fire nasal rhymes furious and sharp as a shank in the ribs.

Richie Spice

Marijuana Remix

WHITE 12"

Apparently this single-sided bootleg remix of Richie Spice's one-drop reggae smash has had punters jumping and screaming at Brixton's DMZ nights for months. As the focal point of dubstep's latest and most successful wave, this reaction is understandable – and probably in no small part because everyone loves a vocal, no matter how much they might deny it. All the same, while a perfect example of the 'bass weight' and 'heaviosity' such a crowd demands, listening even slightly out of context reveals anything but euphoria. Instead, it calls to mind dark inner city streets where nothing can be trusted and no one's your friend. Substituting the laidback smoker's tingle of the original version (voiced on Devon Wheatley's "I Swear" riddim) for an oppressive bottom end and plasticky string glissandi creates a mood of skunked out dread and isolation. Regardless of the technical expertise, it's not the kind of stoned that anyone should really be.

Wiley

50/50

BIG DADA 12"

Together As One EP

WHITE 12"

For someone who was talking about retirement only a couple of months ago, Wiley has been pretty busy. Then again, who really thought he could leave Grime behind? He is one of the scene's only true auteurs, a man frequently credited as its catalyst and original driving force. Opening with the lines: "Yep, it's Eskimo Boy, aka Wiley, and I'm back," "50/50" the lead single from forthcoming album *Playtime Is Over* confirms his return. These words seem to indicate not just his plans to stick around, but also to point to a more realistic view of his career overall. After years of being vaunted as the next big thing, it's as though he's taken a long, hard look at Grime's best chance and opted not for the big money deal, but the independent route that ensures he can make his music without compromise. Full of cocksure wit and confrontational assurance, this is a world away from the crossover attempts that sank his XL debut *Treddin' On Thin Ice*, and the glacial synth lines and pummelling beats are every bit as raw and vital as those on the underground instrumental *Together As One EP*. Needless to say, this is the kind of positive step that could signal the breakout record he's been trying to make for so long. □

Dub Reviewed by Steve Barker

Abassi Allstars

Showcase/Showcase In Dub

UNIVERSAL EGG CD

Showcase is the debut album from last year for Abassi All Stars, a collective headed by Zion Train's Nick Perch, and is now followed swiftly by its essential dub companion. The vocal set selects prime cuts from earlier Deep Root 7" and 10" inch EP releases from the Abassi Allstars along with the best of unreleased tracks recorded through 2004/2005 at Zion's Cologne HQ. The opening versions are based Fabian's classic steppers rhythm *Prophecy* and are reminiscent of some of those On-U Sound 10" discoplate mixes with heavy accents on binghi percussion and counterpoint vocal samples. The brightly shining brass work from Dave Fullwood and Sebastian 'Bigga' Harzmann is reminiscent of the finest moment of The Crispy Horns and vocals from Earl 16, Luciano and Kenny Knots are matched by newer blood Junior Kigawa and Fitta Warrior. The version set has the of bonus of a ten minute dub video remix by the Echolab VJ team showcasing all the featured artists alongside the awesome wattage of the Abassi Hi Power sound system.

Disrupt

Tubby Rom Module / Foundation Bit

WERK 12"

Jahtari are a small, largely net-based label based in Leipzig producing so-called digital laptop reggae to satisfy a growing crowd of Euro sufferers. Recovering gabbacore addict Disrupt found the balmy low end a perfect place to heal his aural extremities, and his twisted version of dub finds its way to the Werk label for this extremely non-virtual cut of vinyl. The track is an x-generational clone of Peego and Fatman's Crank Angle rhythm, cut at Tubby's Waterhouse studio and the squelchy blueprint for Anthony Red Rose's massive hit "Tempo", which was the slo-mo antidote in 1985 to the all conquering Sleg Teng rhythm. Its only after half a minute or so that the track's rhythmic intentions become clear, pitching down the threatening judder of the original a few beats per minute to an entropic trudge, eventually culminating in a locked drone.

Joe Gibbs & The Professionals

State Of Emergency

CRAZY JOE CD

Whereas the so-called Mighty Two, Joe Gibbs plus sidekick engineer Errol Thompson, were credited with many 7's or 12's dub versions on Gibbs's labels, The Professionals were his house band and the name used for his classic mid-70s dub albums. *State Of Emergency* appeared first in 1976 sandwiched between *African Dub Chapter 2* and *African Dub All-Mighty Chapter 3*. In retrospect the albums can be perceived now as respectful but largely formulaic re-treads of vintage Studio One rhythms mixed with popular hits from the day. "Donald Quarrie" is a mix on Cornell Campbell's version of The Heptones' "Get In The Groove", better known as the "Up Park

Camp" rhythm; "High Noon" is Don Drummond's immortal "Heavenless"; "I Shot The President" gets a leg up from Myrna Hague and Marcia Griffith's "Melody Life". Having said that, it's another must for version freaks, and the original artwork is reproduced here, a police shakedown of youths on the street around the time of Gun Court.

Milton Henry

Who Do You Think I Am?

WACKIES CD

In Upsetter world, Milton Henry is perhaps best known as King Medious for his teaming with Junior Byles on "Fever", re-versioned as "This World". His version of Curtis Mayfield's "Gypsy Woman" is also to be found on Blood & Fire's excellent reggae soul set *Darker Than Blue*. One of many under-recorded reggae soul singers, he possessed a versatile vocal style ranging from a rich, deep tenor through to a doo-wop-style near falsetto. He began singing in a vocal group called The Leaders with Prince Alla and Roy 'Soft' Palmer, later of Junior Ross & The Spear but relocated to the States in the late 1970s, where he worked on various day to day tasks at Lloyd 'Bullwackie' Barnes's Wackies studio before fronting the mic for this accomplished set of roots and lovers recorded in 1984. These Itopia rhythms are tough as any of Wackies' output but Henry's voice gives a much smoother impression, especially with the likes of Sugar Minott, Max Romeo and Sonia Love Joy on harmonies. Particularly noteworthy is "Good Old Days", written for his ailing old friend Junior Byles, and "Them A Devil", which initially sounds like another Babylon basher, but on closer inspection turns out to be a comment on unscrupulous producers.

Barrington Levy

Englishman

GREENSLEEVES CD

Always a favourite in the UK, Barrington Levy's entry into the reggae scene straddles the end of the golden era of Roots and the emergence of the more youth oriented dancehall era. He caught the spirit of the times perfectly with his fresh vocals on rhythms from The Roots Radics, here with their original drummer, with Scientist and Jammy at the controls. Studio One rhythms were still being reworked, so we have "Full Up" as "Sister Carol", and "Far East" as "Don't Fuss Or Fight". But that should not distract from the major stylistic advances of Levy's music, which was as influential as the more lauded, and also Jammy produced, Black Uhuru. In addition to the original full album, two 12" cuts are included with DJ versions by Scorch, as well as the title track, toasted as "The Daughter Them Irie". There's also the anthropologically fascinating "Put On Me Clarks", a rap on "Sister Carol", dedicated to the favoured footwear brand in Jamaica for demonstrating dancefloor style, despite its reputation in the UK as the 'sensible shoe'. □

Sip A Cup Meets Negus Roots

Firehouse Rock Volume 1

GUSSIE P CD

Negus Roots was a Jamaican label from the early 80s, a vehicle for releases from Locksley Castell, Horace Martin, Don Carlos and Voice Of Progress, a group featuring the young Junior Reid. Now operated by Robert and Michael Palmer out of London, their original material is being digitally remixed by Gussie P at Kalabash Studios, London. Here Gussie is let loose on archive material recorded at Channel One and Tuff Gong by Crucial Bunny Tom Tom and Errol Brown amongst others. Gussie leaves no traces on the vocal tracks, but the mixes are certainly special. On the opener "Conductor Of Dub", a take of "Mini Bus Driver" is stripped down before the track is rebuilt for the intro to "Dub Of Love", the dubwise version to Don Carlos's "I Love Jah Jah".

Reggae On Top All Stars

Roots Dub Part 1

REGGAE ON TOP CD

As Reggae On Top All Stars, Conscious Soundsman Dougie Wardrop, UK reggae legend Hughie Izachar and label head Barry Isaacs have put together a collection of dub that could heat up any sound system even without a live mix. Through this bubbling stew rises the thunderous "Psalm 91 Dub" ("He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty..."), its vicious mix suggesting more than one pair of hands on the mixing desk. Meanwhile, "Warzone Dub" must be one of the fastest dubs on record. If back in the days of rave, clubbers would chill out with King Tubby, this album could provide a kick start after a night at DMZ or FWD>>. It's just about as brutal as modern steppers can get.

Various

Trojan Rockers Box Set

TROJAN 3xCD

Not just the name of the label run by the late, great Augustus Pablo, Rockers was also a term applied to the militant rhythms developed in the 1970s. Mostly based on the updating of rocksteady classics, it was first associated with Pablo but became the signature sound of drummer Sly Dunbar & The Revolutionaries at Channel One. This is one of the more essential items of the Trojan budget box sets, and together with the earlier *Jah Loves Rockers* provides an invaluable overview of this period of reggae. Early examples of the style are Niney The Observer with John Holt's "Up Park Camp" and "Rockers" from Tapper Zukie. A number of Zukie productions appear here, including The Seekers' "Jah Jah Say" and Knowledge's "Words, Sounds And Power". Many other major producers of the time also excelled in the style – Scratch with the epic "Ketch Vampire" from Devon Irons and Doctor Alimantado, Ossie Hibbert with Earth & Stone's "No Wicked In A Zion", and also Bunny 'Striker' Lee with Johnny Clarke's "Peace And Love In The Ghetto". □

NEW RELEASES:



TEXT OF LIGHT / MY CAT IS AN ALIEN

Cosmic Debris Vol.1 CD



ROBERTO OPALIO

The last night of the Angel... I & II 2CD



FABIO ORSI & GIANLUCA BECUZZI

Muddy speaking ghosts... CD



JENNIFER GENTLE

A New Astronomy CD

FORTHCOMING RELEASES:

JULIE'S HAIRCUT & SONIC BOOM - N-waves 10"
FABIO ORSI - Find Electronica CD

"The Complete Cosmic Debris Series Vol. 1 to 5"
MY CAT IS AN ALIEN / STEVE RODEN CD
MY CAT IS AN ALIEN / KEIJI HAINO CD
MY CAT IS AN ALIEN / MATS GUSTAFSSON CD
MY CAT IS AN ALIEN / LOREN CONNORS &
His Haunted House Band CD

A SILENT PLACE
Casella Postale 99 - 70031 Andria (Ba) - Italy
info@asilentplace.it - www.asilentplace.it

Electronica Reviewed by Ken Hollings

Badun

Badun

RUMP RECORDINGS CD

The less you listen to this Danish trio's debut release, the better it seems to get. Fretless bass and guitar and Fender Rhodes have always been quality signs in music, especially when deployed in the studio with a certain frowning sense of concentration. But combined with some homemade software and neural nets that create a musical computer with a mind of its own, the result is a skittish melange of rhythmic stabs, jumpy phrasing and wayward soloing. With ideas replacing each other so quickly in the mix, it's hard to concentrate upon what progressions might be actually taking place. Better not to pay too much attention but simply absorb what's happening instead.

Ludvig Elblaus

Flannel Poet

ELECTRONIC DESERT CD

Scandinavian producer Ludvig Elblaus explores the possibilities of setting machines free to create their own music without human intervention; judging by his titles, he probably gets them to make them up as well. But on a hands-on, upbeat track such as "Hitta Hem", whose stiff forward momentum and manic irregularities recall such John Baker classics as "The Chase", such worries are quickly dispersed. The nervous, distended pulsations on "Rymd" and the slowly evolving convulsions of closer "Baltice" both suggest a strong feel for a beat and sure sense of timing, even when his powers of description may have deserted him.

DJ Elephant Power

Scratch The Hulu

SONIG CD

Nicolas Baudoux has one basic idea but really knows how to make it work. Twitching turntables under his DJ Elephant Power alias, he manipulates the decks at the outer limits of human dexterity, letting the sounds ping, twang and ricochet back and forth, with wild fluctuations in volume and tempo. *Scratch The Hulu*, his second solo album, presents 12 more dislocations of the same highly strung technique, and the superhuman dexterity in evidence suggest an expert at stacking the plate at an all-you-can-eat salad bar. The trick is to start with the sliced cucumbers and tomatoes and then build up from there.

Rafael Anton Irisarri

Daydreaming

MIASMAH CD

While waiting for some spectral new work to materialise from Norway's Deaf Center, you could do a lot worse than spending some time with the latest long player on founding member Erik Skodvin's Miasmah label. Subtly restrained and following the cleanest of melodic lines, this debut from Irisarri still manages to sound as though it were recorded inside a piano, rather than just in its immediate vicinity. Fortunately, the Seattle based producer has a

firm enough structural hold on what he's doing not to become lost in so vast an acoustic space. The results make for an excellent companion to Greg Haines's *Slumber Tides*, released on Miasmah last year.

Lambent/Duodecimo

Split LP

INSINE NO NUMBER CD

A Last FM side project that's been stuck on hold since the start of the decade, this new release from the Insine label is split between Lambent, a Japanese composer now based in Berlin, and Duodecimo, a couple of environmental hackers who contort field recordings made around Dartmoor into fine brutalist shapes. Where Lambent's thoughtful compositions are clear and ethereal, evoking a lost rural idyll, Duodecimo's are grainy and out of focus, creating teeming hives of microscopic life.

Håkan Lidbo

Dunka Dunka

SHITKATAPULT CD

Swedish producer Håkan Lidbo already has more than 100 releases to his name, and a new album on T Raumschmiere's Shitkatapult label probably means that his neighbours aren't going to be thrilled. Lidbo claims the title is a term used by old people to describe the sound made by modern music, but it's hard not to detect a little street slang in there too – the term also being used to describe a particularly prodigious front or back lower appendage, depending on how you're coming at it. Either way, *Dunka Dunka* slams and bangs along in a sloppy freeform manner that's really not that clever, but the beats are good, so who really cares? Perhaps your neighbours, of course.

Lukid

Onandon

WERK CD

According to his press bio, British artist Lukid, aka Luke Blair, isn't even old enough to buy ten Marlboro Lights from his local supermarket. Whether you believe that or not depends on how easy you think it is to come up with a low-slung set of grooves like "A Smart Girl", a neat put-on like "Fela" or such a playful title track. Lukid's preternatural maturity shows through in his awareness of how much fun you can have while keeping it simple. Of course, it's always possible that his dad put the whole thing together himself.

Naw

City Saturate

NOISE FACTORY CD

The follow-up to Neil Wiernik's memorable *Green Nights And Orange Days* release from 2004 opens with "Harbourline Rendered", an oily iridescent spectrum of sustained notes floating across its surface. It's a contrasting mood to the standout track "5am West Bound": a set of well placed clicks and clear-cut beats that is neatly echoed in Tomas Jirkus's "As West As It Gets" closing remix. In between, Wiernik works his way systematically through

a set of ringing metallic mediations on a single theme, clustered principally around the three-part "City Saturate" series at the album's centre. Looped and reworked into different speeds and rhythms, it demonstrates how a conceptually minimalist approach doesn't automatically mean less.

Oto

Time Capsule Sunday

OTOKIKIYAMA CD

Having produced music for Sony, Mercedes-Benz and Heinz, Chicago based sound designer Kiku Hibino has recently worked on the Stop-Rokkasho campaign, curated by Ryuichi Sakamoto, to raise public awareness of the dangers of nuclear reprocessing plants. This, his first collection, concerns itself with themes of capturing and preserving fleeting moments: opener "Daidai" shakes and trembles like a half-remembered Japanese folk tune. Elsewhere the composer uses the noises made by skipping CDs as his source material, building them up into randomly shimmering tunes that rapidly come and go, often disappearing beneath processed recordings of busy streets and crowded playgrounds, as if he were trying to cram in as many memories as possible before it all disappears.

DJ Scotch Egg

Scotchausen

ADAADAT/VERY FRIENDLY CD

Giving you everything you're looking for in a CD but in about a third of the time, Shigeru Ikeda wraps his thumbs around his Gameboy for a second time to give us the complete history of Western music in a little less than 30 minutes. From a tribute to Bach made up entirely of themes written by Mozart and Richard Wagner to a particularly warm and thoughtful homage to street musician and composer Moondog, this is 8-bit aesthetics for the YouTube generation, only without all the sleeping kittens.

SoNiCbRaT

HI.A.TUS

ASYLUM NO NUMBER CD-R

The cover art, a series of dye-cut atolls set in a foldout inlay, suggests we're in for another bout of mild Raster-Noton tedium, but Singaporean sound designer Darren Ng has something else in mind. The lush piano, suspended moments and discreet digital tweaking of the decay on "The Lacuna Medley" suggests a bleached-out form of exotica. It's a mood that informs the rest of this project, which transforms the pauses of the day into a series of translucent dreams, made up of filmy keyboards, overlaid washes and floating structures. Martin Denny would be proud.

Unusual And Electric

Deep Fried Muffalata

ZIRKUS LP

It's hard to find of any solid information about this anonymous duo: their Website is a tad lame, and the only friend they had on their

MySpace page was Tom, which is kind of sad, when you come to think of it. However, their debut EP sounds approximately like what you'd get if you asked The Orb and Depth Charge to DJ at your wedding reception. Spaced out samples, drifting voices and weird jumpy breaks that barely stay within the bounds of common decency. Whoever put the cheery "No Sleep To Night" and the subatomic "Slumber Zirkus" together obviously had a good time in the process, and the two "St Johns Street Dub" tracks are about as righteous as they come.

Varo

My Body Is The Tempo

7" VINYL CD

Just when you thought it was safe to exit screaming from the cinema, all-girl Taiwanese trio Varo are back to cut another carefree swathe through your fondest recollections with a second album of selectively remembered movie themes. "The Conversation" and "Ghost World" are both transformed into lounge music for people who live in studio apartments; the vocals on "Blow Up" seem like a breezy afterthought, while the beats get heavy on "Winter Passing" and the fuzz pedal receives a serious stomping on "The Dying Gaul".

Daniel Williams

Meeting Our Ancestors

DEREVO CD

Hailing from the former Soviet Union, Anton Adassinsky's Derevo theatre company has an almost metaphysical take on bodily movement, using gestures that take time to resolve themselves. This gracefulness is well reflected in the electronic scores Daniel Williams has devised to accompany their performances. Of particular note is "After_Robert's Dreams", a warm, expansive slow-moving set of variations created in Edinburgh after a Derevo piece inspired by, and dedicated to, Robert Wyatt. Mesmerising and slow, delicately stated and overflowing with confidence, this collection of recordings, made between 2004 and 2006 at various performances and festivals, offers a stimulating introduction to a fascinating project.

WoO

Mobi Rock

RX:TX CD

Any release on Slovenia's rx:tx label is worth investigating, and this offering from WoO – Serbian guitarist and founding member of The Belgrade Noise Society – is no exception. Working live in his home studio with no editing, laptop manipulation or overdubbing, he creates a full bandwidth of finely delineated noise out of two electric guitars, plus a floor-full of effects pedals. The upper frequency range is further enhanced by the use of such supplementary devices as mobile phones, magnets, remote controls and radio receivers. As a result, it seems as if the air itself has taken on a ragged scouring shape around each of his compositions. A performance by WoO must certainly be worth catching. □

Global Reviewed by Martin Longley

12k1042

Candido Fabre Y Su Banda Cubano Soy

TUMI CD

Fabre started out with Orquesta Original de Manzanillo in the 1970s, eventually forming his own 14 piece group in 1993. This is one of the best Cuban son outfits around, all of its elements crisply directed at the dancefloor, but still making for good armchair listening. His voice is authoritative, gritty and well rounded, surrounded by knifing horns, splay-chorded piano, small tres guitar and tarry bass, parading with a drunken wiggle. There are subdivisions of son (conga, guaracha, bolero and danzón), as well as a couple of slow songs. One of these latter, "Por Qué Tú No Te Enamoras De Mi", is particularly dashing, resonating with flute trills and bright string showers.

Fanfare Ciocarlia Queens And Kings

ASPHALT TANGO CD

Often this brass-heavy Romanian ensemble appear to find it impossible to escape the social pressure to host an infestation of special guest singers. But on this, their fifth album, at least they are all fellow Gypsies, making contributions that match up to the controlled chaos that has become the Ciocarlia trademark. Esma Redzepova (Macedonia), Ljiljana Butler (Bosnia) and Jony Iliev (Bulgaria) are masters of accelerated verbal precision, and their verses are spectacularly punctuated by the 11 piece Ciocarlia's strident trumpet, clarinet and saxophone solos. The lolling rhythms are taken at a corner-swerving pace, underpinned by huffing baritone horn. Kalome, the French flamenco duo, stretch stylistic barriers the furthest, but even they eventually blend seamlessly with the Ciocarlia crew. "Duj Duj" can only be described as rampant Balkan ska, and Iliev's "Mig Mig", topped by a staggering alto saxophone crescendo, qualifies for the silliest of all the vocals.

Ibrahim Ferrer

Mi Sueño

WORLD CIRCUIT CD

Translating as 'my dream', *Mi Sueño*, in the case of Cuban vocalist Ibrahim Ferrer, was to record an entire set of boleros, but when he died, the final album sessions lay three weeks ahead. Some of this material is derived from demo versions, although the listener wouldn't guess so. Recorded in Havana, Ferrer is partnered by Roberto Fonseca (piano), Cachaito Lopez (bass) and Manuel Galban (guitar). A couple of these songs feature lush string arrangements, and Ferrer also sings with just piano accompaniment, alone or in duet with Omara Portuondo. The old Buena Vista Social Club singer's posthumous album glides by with a romantic minimalism, a chamber group sparseness framing the details of his highly expressive voice, as it curves and twists with supple shifts of phrasing.

Kassin+2 Futurismo

LUAKA BOP CD

This is the final album in a trilogy where each member of this Rio-based group takes the lead. Now, it's producer, bassist and singer Alexandre Kassin's turn. He has produced Marisa Monte and Bebel Gilberto, as well as playing in Caetano Veloso's group. +2 guitarist Moreno Veloso is Caetano's son, and drummer Domenico Lancellotti completes the line-up. The explorations here are initially quite subtle, the disc beginning gently, a carioca breeze delicately infiltrated by electro wormings. But by track six, the heavy bossa "Ponto Final", some more overtly unsettling strategies are introduced: oily guitars, warbly synths and tinkling piano shards. "Mensagem" is particularly nagging, "Samba Machine" features stuttering organ and frazzled guitar, whilst "Homem Ao Mar" could be described as Congolese surf rock.

Papa Noel & Bana Congo

Café Noir

TUMI CD

In the old days, singer and guitarist Papa Noel played with Franco's OK Jazz, and he's still rejoicing in the mingling of Cuban and Congolese styles, here joined by tres player Cotó. His "Africa Mokili Mobimba" has long been popular in incarnations featuring Sam Mangwana and Tabu Ley Rocherau, and with the opening number Noel comes back to reclaim the song. It's testament to this album's quality that its remainder manages to sustain suitably stratospheric levels, aided by Cameroonian saxophonist Manu Dibango, who guests on a pair of tracks, and the gloriously liberated guest vocals of Sultan Zembellat.

Saborit

Que Linda Es Mi Cuba

TUMI CD

Eleodoro Leon Alarcon is the founder and musical director of this eight piece campesino ensemble from Manzanillo, in the east of Cuba, but the group take their name from Eduardo Saborit, who was a major influence when they began back in the early 1980s. Opening with "La Invitacion De Tomasa", they establish the pattern to come with a twist of mournful wistfulness in the lead vocals. They also dabble in the odd Colombian cumbia. The ringing solos of tres player Domingo Alcantara are a major feature, and far more prominent than is usually the case in this setting.

Tinariwen

Aman Iman

INDEPENDIENTE CD

Tinariwen are Tuareg desert nomads, exiled from Kidal, in northern Mali, over 20 years ago, wandering across Libya and Algeria, where they became revolutionary soldiers for a short while. Their name means, loosely, 'empty desert places'. The group's beginnings were ramshackle and itinerant, and it took until 2000 before they released their first album. Until then, Tinariwen's music was circulated on

bootleg cassettes. *Aman Iman*'s producer is Justin Adams, sideman to Robert Plant. Tinariwen have the dusty, cracked-leather creak of the Saharan desert, but this authenticity is coupled with a striking grasp of psychedelic blues guitar techniques, curlicue amplifier frazzle emitted over rolling handclaps, ambling basslines and call 'n' response ensemble vocals. High female ululations punctuate the parched declamations of the male voices, electric guitars knit across the sands, accompanied by minimal percussion and massed voices. When they're at home recording, Tinariwen take on a collective form, and "Ahimana" is one of the most evocative songs here, featuring the mysterious Japonais, who rarely ventures out on the road with the others.

Various

What's Happening In Pernambuco

LUAKA BOP CD

David Byrne's *Brazil Classics* series reaches number seven with this survey of the scene in the north eastern state of Pernambuco. Most of its 13 artists live in or around Recife, and the majority of their songs are fast and frothy the vocals invariably both dry and melodic, Portuguese syllables being ideally suited to speedy tripping with limber grace. The percussion backing and strummed guitars (or tiny cavaquinhos) are dipped in the folk traditions of the region, but this mangue beat style crucially necessitates a fusion with funk, hiphop, rock and pop. The best tracks happen to come from the most familiar names: Otto, Cidadão Instigado and Nação Zumbi. There's an overall similarity in approach throughout, but fortunately the formula is very attractive.

Byron Wallen

Meeting Ground

TWILIGHT JAGUAR CD

Ostensibly, Byron Wallen is a jazz trumpeter, but he's also a committed musical traveller and a seeker of abstract spiritual vibrations. Surely Don Cherry must be his guiding light. Here, Wallen is immersed in the Gnawa music of Morocco, with his regular Indigo quartet augmented by a guesting M'allem (master musician) Boujemaa Boubul, singing and strumming the deeply resonant three-stringed guimbri. Boubul is also a percussionist, setting up tinny patterns on those distinctive metal castanets, the qaraqeb. There are some beautifully sonorous moments here, as Larry Bartley's hard double bass thrumming blends with Boubul's taut guimbri buzz, echoed by Wallen's own muted low notes. A ritualistic abstraction pervades, with jazz, funk and dub structures building then receding. At times, looseness dominates, with sounds of cattle, flies and muezzin calls adding local colour. Conventional structure is continually on the edge of disintegration. One track smears into another, creating a narrative flow, as Wallen takes a refreshing gamble with his structural ratios. □



12K



Hiphop Reviewed by Dave Tompkins & co

Devin The Dude featuring Snoop & Andre 3000

What A Job

MP3

Saw the Rove blob rapping on Fox, heard that LA electro producer Rich Cason had passed and got sad. Cheered up a little when P of Mobb Deep referred to himself as a face carpenter. Was happy to learn there was once a group called Gang Of Textbooks. Even better was hearing Devin The Dude use the endangered term 'MC' as a verb – no chest-butt, just something he does and is happy to be. Devin's epiphany is grounded in a 4am studio ashtray, some post-booth contentment. "Hope the bad news come some other time." At the end of the day, it's a pretty decent gig (as is a job that entails listening to Devin The Dude). The acoustic jangle is refuge from the new Timbaland album in which rap takes another hit for glorified pop. Nor has the studio engineer gotten this much affection since the Bob Power days—don't bite the hand that passes the fatty. Heathrow favorite Snoop makes an appearance as does Andre, more alert after getting disorporated by Lil Wayne on "Hollywood Divorce", remembering fans of Outkast and not *Idlewild*. You can almost hear Devin's inner Zeldar sending him those 'please-rip-shit' messages. "Exactamundo," returns Mr 3000.

DJ Ivory

Hear No Evil 3

HEAVY BRONX CD

True story. Instead of "Say cheese", Ivory's kids (ages two and five) have been taught to say "Bronx" and make a Tim Dog fist for the camera. When they get older, they'll say, "Dad is insane" or maybe "I can't believe he hawked our cuteness for these CD covers and still wouldn't let us near his Three Times Dope test press of Joe Familiar." This third instalment of the *Hear No Evil* series begins with a satanic Tragedy verse that makes Big L's "Devil's Son" look like a church mouse, with less Jesus snuff and nun-gunning and more truth in confusion: "His greatest trick was making the world believe he didn't exist." (That you George II?) One of Philly's all-time greats, EST is surely the only guy with the mental fridge magnets to hook up "nifty" with "whiff the". There's also what may be the only rap song with the word 'sailing' in its title, and an unsmelled version of Donald D spitting over "Cuttin' Herbie", once an instrumental known for its squishy turntables. Despite all this, a parts manager at a Mazda dealership in Long Island (who in all seriousness is a mimeo of Herc from *The Wire*) was reportedly glum because *Hear No Evil 3* didn't adhere to the all-rap format of previous volumes, as if paralysed by the inclusion of rare handclap disco, modern (Cuban) soul and Caron Wheeler. My favourite is another British soul track, similar to 52nd Street, as yet unidentified, at least until we mic someone's kids and bribe them with helium and Tim Dog action figures.

Lil Wayne

Intro from *Da Drought 3*

YOUNG MONEY ENTERTAINMENT MIXTAPE

Contrast this with Talib Kweli's Mims diss "Niggaz Lie A Lot" for further proof that Wayne might be the only rapper around who can rep lyrical craft without sounding like he's a den leader for the local boy scouts. Over the "Hot" instrumental, Wayne breaks in and out of his newly minted dancehall patois, sticking close to the diction ("dreadlocks swing down me back like Rapunzel") and the syntax ("Fuck a competition, man, I murder dem"), but finding time to cross-reference himself too ("we are make it rain so you better bring a swimsuit"). Granted reggae is no difficult leap stylistically for Wayne, especially next to him rapping in French over Swizz Beatz's "It's Me, Bitches". But consider how he acknowledges the track's "G' Thang" sample with nothing but a timely mention of sports coupes, or the "Jesus Walks" sample with a nod to his uncle, for whom he'd bleed, and you get a sense that this isn't just dress-up. "That is why I'm hot," Wayne says. Then he laughs, then he tells us to have fun. NICK SYLVESTER

Mims

This Is Why I'm Hot

CAPITOL 12"

G'bliss the analysis ad absurdum 'parody' pieces Mims' idiotic song has birthed stateside, but let's not forget: this song is what people who hate rap music probably think all rap music sounds like. The hellacious built-as-ringtone synthline that pulses intravenous-like; the brag without craft ("I'm hot cause I'm fly/ You ain't cause you not"); the entitlement and the nihilism ("This is why I'm hot/I don't gotta rap/I could sell a mil saying nothin on the track"); the regional beat snippets invoked throughout, as if only to prove marketing reach. Anyway, this is sad, sad stuff. Rappers, Mims says, are only as good as the beats they rap (or don't rap) over; people will listen to anything you tell them to. And if Mims says it, it must be true. We laugh now, but for how much longer, etc. NICK SYLVESTER

Mobb Deep

Infamous Archives

STREETCORE 2xCD

There's a war going on online, no man is safe from MP3 blogs and bit torrents, mostly. Gone are the days of the hand-to-hand, nth-generation cassette pilfered from the label, or the tidy profits of white labelling one's own unreleasables, so now seems as good a time as any for the prolific duo of Prodigy and Havoc to jack their own vaults. This double disc archive is drawn mostly from the fatally angry *Hell On Earth* era, and most of the first third wouldn't have seemed out of place on that classic album: "Everyday Gun Play" is an elaborately scripted revenge story wherein P and cronies trail their mark to a mall food court, while "Rep The QBC" and "QB Meets Southside" are grimy, humid-sounding classics, from a time when a sinister Rhodes trumped the hook. Also stunning is "Cobra", a

shivery, haunted house-like between-labels riposte to anyone challenging the Mobb's clutch on the game. Of course, after descending into the dusty, dusted basements of their minds for too long, even lines about toting two shotguns and looking half-crazy with an "army bag full of money" start sounding brilliant by association. Best to pause between pulls, and remember them as they are here: two dwarfish toughs, hobo campfires, thronging posses and representation. As the 50 Cent cameo on "Bump That" reminds you: nowadays it's survival of the fittest; only the muscular and properly greased survive. HUA HSU

7L & Razor

Blade Runners

MIX CD

In a studio at Cutting Records, you can see the tape edit block where the late Chep Nunez, Latin Rascals and many others boxcut and spliced classic edit mixes in the 80s. They kept wee hours and, judging from the block (scuffed all to catfuck hell), were lucky to get home with their fingers. A quick 27 tracks, this digital ode starts by turning "King Of Rock" into a WWF laser show. The inclusion of KTU Freestyle drama is perfect for the tumult and it's not entirely sentimental, as Razor shows restraint when finding beats within beats, whether he's taping up the glasses of former 3rd Bass MC Serch, or on the T La Rock finale, which can't avoid lame jokes about the CD skipping (before they were invented). Even Debbie Deb and Lisa Lisa are allowed a different look, escaping redundant 80s mix hell and dudes tightening their Girtalk jeans.

Spade Brigade

I'm Your Man

KAY DEE 45

They're right. This record makes you feel like Yul Brynner's robot gunman in *Westworld*, after wasting Streisand's husband and being exfoliated with HCl. Said one rare soul collector: "It'll melt your fuckin' face off!" Crowned by Kenny Dope and Keb Darge, Spade Brigade was disinterred by David Griffiths, a former landscaper known to DJ with hedgeclippers in his holster. The hysteria generated by this 45 ("one of the finest Soul records to rise from an unmarked grave") can't hold a shattered toast to that of the vocals. "Anybody wanna know who I am?" screams the chorus. We know they're from western New York – home to the Wurlitzer, blizzard emergency tunnels and a former Harald Bodecoder lab. We also know this 45 is from 1980, though 1980 wouldn't recognise it. And funk, disco and modern soul would trip over themselves to claim it despite being a little freaked by the hooting and gobbling at the end, less a breakdown and more of an aberration tearing off into the woods with its underwear on its head. What to do while the song finds its way back? Get Sa-Ra on the horn? To quote a Buffalonian who once broke into the Wurlitzer factory with a hatchet: "Party like a sea cucumber's intestinal launch." □

Jazz & Improv Reviewed by Brian Morton

Carlos Barreto Trio/Louis Sclavis

Radio Song

CLEAN FEED CD

There isn't a more enterprising label in Europe – arguably, anywhere – at the moment than Portugal's Clean Feed. Last time out, on *Lokomotiv*, the bassist's trio – with Mario Delgado on guitar and Jose Salgueiro on percussion – featured a guest spot from François Corneloup. This time, it's another, even more distinguished French saxophonist. Sclavis plays soprano, clarinet and bass clarinet on three numbers and, fine though the trio are, it's his contributions that make the date, though Barreto's own solo on the opening "Distresser" is every bit as vital as the Frenchman's Dolphy-tinged bass clarinet feature. Delgado has some interesting set-ups on hand and the drummer knows how to shift between driving grooves and more abstract stuff. "O Rapaz Do Lixo", dedicated to "Trash Boy" George W Bush, is a minor classic.

Johannes Bauer/Thomas Lehn/Jon Rose

Futch

JAZZWERKSTATT CD

Futch is 'futsch': gone, out of here, fucked-up. The younger of the trombone playing Bauers has always enjoyed edgy, almost clownish situations, and teaming up with analogue synthist Lehn and fiddler/knob twiddler Rose was a logical step. Much of the time, Johannes seems happy to crank out blaring one-steps as accompaniment to Rose's scratchy monologues. Bats squeak overhead and parts of this might do very nicely as a soundtrack to some grand guignol silent film about a mad scientist and his deformed assistant. This is a cracking disc.

Big Satan

Live Incognito

SCREWGUN 2xCD

The contrived ugliness of this trio – Tim Berne, Marc Ducret, Tom Rainey – grates almost as often as it intrigues, but the performances here lack the relentless violence of their earliest incarnations a decade ago. The two discs are headed *Desperate* and *More Desperate* (or rather, they are if you can be bothered to decipher the backwards writing and run-on credit lines) but there's a more measured and thoughtful cadence to the playing. The opening number almost sounds like an Ornette Coleman line, alto and guitar in unison over a drum pattern that could almost be a teenage Denardo Coleman. Berne has altered his pitching since he started doubling on baritone; it's more orthodox, but also more effective. The group also work as a quartet with keyboardist Craig Taborn, but this is the real deal, raw and urgent.

Taylor Ho Bynum & Tomas Fujiwara

True Events

482 MUSIC CD

Bynum's fat, rich cornet sound has been a feature of Anthony Braxton's groups for some

years, so it's no surprise to find that Braxton's "language improvisation" principles are a direct influence on these fine brass/percussion duos. The association with Fujiwara goes back even further and Bynum is at pains to make clear that these are not simply 'turn up and play' recordings, but the result of many, many hours spent in collaborative playing. Most of the pieces have some established parameters, most notably the "Five Miniatures (Ficciones)", which derive from specific timbres, rhythms and approximate forms. At the opposite extreme is the long "Emperor Of Ice Cream", the only piece on the set undertaken without cues of any sort and not coincidentally the least coherent. Ostensibly very different from Bynum's earlier *Other Stories*, which concentrated on composed forms, this is still much concerned with the fine line between 'written' and 'free' music, and every bit as successful.

Cold Bleak Heat

Simitu

FAMILY VINEYARD CD

A lyrical, blazing return by the avant jazz supergroup. CBH consist of saxophonist Paul Flaherty and drummer Chris Corsano with nmperrign trumpeter Greg Kelley scorching the walls and No Neck Blues Band bassist Matt Heyner anchoring things down below. As always when Flaherty and Corsano get together (here and as Dream/Aktion Unit), there's a careful balance of heat and light. The most striking thing about *Simitu* – which seems to mean an ideal state in which intellectual, emotional, physical and spiritual energies are all engaged at once and in communication with others – is how confidently the music moves between unfettered blow-up and something altogether quieter and more contemplative. This feels very much like a settled group

Graham Collier

Hoarded Dreams

CUNEIFORM CD

The most important Graham Collier piece is always the one he's working on right at the moment, but this 1983 performance has an iconic place in his career, double-distilling the nostalgia from having taken place at the much loved and never really replaced Bracknell Jazz Festival. *Hoarded Dreams* – which subsequently gave its name to Collier's ensemble – was itself a dream band of British, European and American players. The trumpet section, individually and vividly featured in part five of the suite, consisted of Ted Curson, Henry Lowther, Manfred Schoof, Tomasz Stanko and Kenny Wheeler, while Juhania Aaltonen, Art Themen and John Surman were among the woodwinds. The precise personnel is important because what made *Hoarded Dreams* different from the run of big-band projects was that Collier marshalled his essentially simple material in such a way as to foreground each and every member of the orchestra as a soloist. It's a

luminous performance, on a par – for me, at least – with any of Ellington's late suites. Long past time our exiled duke was called back and given a role commensurate with his powers.

Jackson Harrison Trio

Land Tides

HATOLOGY CD

An impressive debut from the 25 year old Australian pianist, particularly given that he hadn't previously worked with bassist Thomas Morgan and drummer Dan Weiss, both now well established in Brooklyn, where this was recorded. Stylistically, Harrison seems to sit somewhere in the territory marked out by later Bill Evans and picked up by Paul Bley's early 70s trios. His mentors, though, were fellow-Australian Mike Nock and the eternally underrated Marc Copland, and once you know that, the music is more exactly centred. What's striking is how concentrated Harrison's playing is, not in the sense of sounding clotted or tonally congested but rather in seeming to come from an almost mystical understanding that transcends technique.

Fred Lonberg-Holm

Terminal Valentine

ATAVISTIC CD

"Three Note Song" is just that, but cellist Fred Lonberg-Holm makes it sound like something much busier and more complex is afoot. As an instrumental voice, he's always intriguingly hard to place, often phrasing like a horn player and with an abrasive attack that leaves overtones hanging in the air. Bassist Jason Roebke and drummer Frank Rosaly are never diffident partners, but they certainly don't make a bid for the limelight. Roebke has a fantastic sound, fulsome but always accurately pitched and placed, while Rosaly shovels in crisp fills and accents. "And You Smile" is a lovely thing, with a line that is almost vocalised, in sharp contrast to the freer idiom of "No One Will Ever Be Forgotten", which is the edgiest cut of the set.

Phil Minton & Veryan Weston

Ways: A Songbook

JAZZWERKSTATT CD

Only these guys could put together Charles Ives, Eric Dolphy, Schubert, Hugo Wolf, Ho Chi Minh, Kurt Weill, Jacques Brel, a Wobblies text to music by Frankie Armstrong, ee cummings and "Jailhouse Rock" and make it all work. It's mostly older stuff, recorded in 1987 and 1992 and already released in part on a trio of ITM discs (there's similar stuff on the Leo release *Songs From A Prison Diary*) but delivered here with maximum impact. Minton's fascination with classical and vernacular singing is evident throughout and his version of Arthur Sullivan's "The Lost Chord" is worth comparing with Derek Bailey's notorious interpretation on one of Fred Frith's *Guitar* compilations. Weston's ability to invest apparently simple music with such vertiginous steepest is extraordinary, here as always.

Margriet Naber Tchicai

Colored Air

TCH CD

Margriet is the Dutch born wife of saxophonist John Tchicai, and this seems to initiate a new family label. Five of the ten tracks are piano solos. The rest are group performances with Reggy Marks on reeds, Mark Oi guitar, Erik Kleven bass and Babatunde Lea drums and congas, with an additional vocal part from Naber on "There's A Lot You Don't Know". The impression struck by the opening "Tinkerup" and subsequently is, bizarrely, of a slowed-up and perhaps feminised version of Abdullah Ibrahim's dark vamps and declamatory right-hand lines, but with a blunt cadence that is all her own. It's almost a shock when the group kicks into life ten minutes into the disc, with Oi's guitar and Marks's tenor riding a dance groove that's infectious enough but not nearly as challenging as the unaccompanied playing. Shame there isn't more of Naber's scat/Afro vocals on the set. And I never thought I'd catch myself writing a line like that.

Quest

Redemption: Live In Europe

HATOLOGY CD

The group name is strictly only attached to the subtitle, with the date credited collectively to David Liebman, Richie Beirach, Ron McClure and Billy Hart, a sign perhaps that this reunion brings together four very individual composer-leaders who've spent the last 15 years apart working on their own things. Even so, what was always definitive about Quest, a genuinely common language, is still very much in evidence. They begin with a relatively routine read of "Round Midnight" but follow it up with a stunning version of Coltrane's rarely covered "Ogunde". "WTC/Steel Prayers" medleys compositions by saxophonist and pianist respectively inspired by the 2001 attacks. Genuinely moving stuff that seems to trigger the longest and loosest piece of the set, Hart's title cut closes out a very powerful hour and a quarter that demonstrates there is as much creative life in this outfit as there is in the members' now very different projects.

Freddy Studer/Hamid Drake/Michael Zerang

Drumming Chicago

FMR CD

The label has a solid reputation for percussion projects, but this Studer-inspired grouping outdoes anything so far. The title track is the only one where all three concentrate on their full kits. Elsewhere, there's a huge variety of other sounds from the brushed snares of "Movements On Skin" to the mysterious scratches and chimes of "North Damen Trance" and the folksy immediacy of "Six Hands". "Prima Materia" might be a dedication to Rashied Ali; it's the other cut where the three kits are extensively deployed. Great playing all round, and recommended even if you've previously had an allergic reaction to all-drumming records. □

Outer Limits Reviewed by Keith Moliné

Axolotl

Memory Theatre

IMPORTANT CD

A compilation of three rare releases (*Chemical Theatre*, *Oranur* and *Object Phantom*), *Memory Theatre* presents Karl Bauer's highly distinctive trance-drone ritual music at its most beguiling. Axolotl's music here is rough and earthy, yet somehow not quite of this world. Bauer's woozy, wayward violin negotiates a bleary-eyed path through the dark undergrowth of naive electronic scribblings and grainy, lo-fi textures. "Lake Garden" is a highlight, poised at the exact moment where ecstasy spills over into mania; it's a truly bizarre (and quite brilliant) confection of dulcimer, fuzz-synth and weeping violin, whipped up into the kind of maelstrom MBV's Kevin Shields used to be famous for.

Jefre Cantu-Ledesma

Black Is The Colour Of My True Love's Hair

STATIC CARAVAN CD-R

The Holy See

Fucking Physics

DIGITALIS CD-R

Two spin-off projects from the Californian bliss rock outfit Tarentel, both involving Root Strata label boss Cantu-Ledesma. His solo record features five pieces of well-executed drift 'n' drone using guitar and four-track. If it had been released 15 years ago by Main or Stars Of The Lid, it would have doubtless garnered hosannas left right and centre, but it would be unfair to dismiss such a lovely record on that basis. His Holy See duo with Tarentel colleague Jim Redd is far more energised. Violent and noisy, *Fucking Physics* succeeds because it sounds like the artists are really revelling in the overlapping textures created by their sheets of fuzz and feedback. Kind of like Slowdive meets Skullflower.

Jonathan Colecloough & Andrew Liles

Torch Songs

DIE STADT 2xLP

Based on live and studio pieces produced by drone alchemist Colecloough, *Torch Songs* features long stretches of music that are as exquisitely tactile as you would expect, but with subtly roughed up snags and edges that one presumes result from the input of current Nurse With Wound member Liles. Her micro-gestures serve to ground Colecloough's gauzy textures and save the whole thing from becoming just too perfect. The springy beats that materialise on side four have that same delightful incongruity that Liles's Nurse With Wound boss Steven Stapleton is such a master of, albeit with a tad less slapstick involved.

Aaron Dillaway

Rotting Nepal

BLOSSOMING NOISE LP

Rotting Nepal was recorded during ex-Wolf Eyes noise supremo Dillaway's Nepalese

sojourn in early 2005. It comprises source material from local radio and shortwave, alongside the usual cracked electronics and bloody distortion, but is significantly less dense than most of his previous work, perhaps because he had a reduced arsenal of circuitry at his disposal. Somehow, despite its slightly cobbled together feel, it has an intimacy that is often lacking in the field, particularly on side one, where Dillaway's dial-tweaking has the intuitive deftness of a master improvisor. Long stretches of the second side, however, see him indulging in the same unspectacular fuzz-wankery that blights much of the work of his former Wolf Eyes buddies.

Eyes And Arms Of Smoke

A Religion Of Broken Bones

CENOTAPH LP

If, like me, you've never heard this side project of Trevor Tremaine and Robert Beatty from noise destroyers Hair Police, you are likely to be as startled as I was by the contents of *A Religion Of Broken Bones*. It's a beautiful and unique collection of four lengthy acoustic songs (and one instrumental), whose rigorous, complex structures recall the darkest moments of *First Utterance* by Comus and even the avant folk of 70s Rock In Opposition legend Albert Marcoeur. C Spencer Yeh and Greg Kelley lend a hand with some mystic drone action (the former's violin is a particularly strong presence on "Nemesis"), but the group have a character that is entirely their own. There's none of the tight-assed prissiness that blights most chamber rock; Ellen Mollé's viola and Sara O'Keefe's clarinet are sourly, subtly off-key, while Tremaine and Beatty (on guitar and drums respectively) sound nicely loose and a bit dazed.

Elisabeth Flunger

Songs

LOEWENHERTZ CD

These 24 short solo pieces by percussionist Flunger are only 'songs' in that they stick to simple, repetitive patterns. They are actually more like games, in which the composition comprises the setting up of materials (mostly small bits of metallic junk) and the drawing up of a set of physical rules to govern the actions that will be employed to play the various objects. It's an interesting approach to solo performance, and one that raises questions about the mechanics and motivations that normally lie behind compositional decisions, as well as the nature of virtuosity. It's as if Flunger has turned herself into a clockwork machine, as she scurries round her collection of instruments with great delicacy and precision.

Hans Fjellestad

Snails R Sexy

ACCRETIONS CD

Fjellestad is probably best known as the maker of the 2004 film documentary *Moog*, based on the life and work of the (now sadly deceased) pioneering synth manufacturer, but he's also a proficient and prolific musician, and a master of analogue synthesis. *Snails R*

Sexy manages somehow to merge the famously warm and tactile nature of the Moog (he also uses theremin) with more current-sounding elements of sonic abstraction and edgy noise. It's rare to find someone working with this kind of equipment who clearly has no truck with kitschy fetishism; Fjellestad aims for freshness rather than reverence or reference, and compositions like "Fist" and "Crush Goddess" show that he's no purveyor of Ambient space noodle either. There's some of the manic energy of Keiji Haino's recent electronic work here, but at times it gives way to moments of surprising spontaneous delicacy that recall the synth improvisations of Thomas Lehn.

Kark

The Hermit

HP CYCLE LP

From this 50-strong Louisville collective that includes members of Kentucky space noise heroes Sapat, Virgin Eye Blood Brothers and Belgian Waffles comes this slab of delectably hobbled big-band jazz. One piece emerges from a hushed, Harry Partch-like opening section into a kind of 'three wheels on my wagon' version of Duke Ellington's "Caravan". Its latter stages comprise some muscular and spirited astral cacophony and a final restatement of the main theme that just about stays on the charming side of hamfisted. The flipside is built around two great passages that sound like a marching band whose drinks have been spiked, along with some lovely wispy atmospherics and another righteous, all-guns-blazing splurge.

Christian Marclay & Okkyung Lee/My Cat Is An Alien

From The Earth To The Spheres Vol 6

A SILENT PLACE CD

The Opilio brothers have made a little go a long way, and their releases as MCIAA always throw up surprises. Their contribution to the seventh (despite it being labelled *Volume 6*) double-header in the *From The Earth To The Spheres* series once again sees the duo conjuring the weirdest magic from what initially sounds like so much stumbling around in the dark. MCIAA play a kind of space rock in reverse; rather than the product of humans seeking to evoke the limitless freedom of the cosmos, it's more like music played by aliens who've found themselves locked in a cramped rehearsal room in Turin. Marclay and Lee (on turntables/electronics and cello respectively) are the duo's guests for this instalment. Their edit of a 2002 live show is jagged and electric, as enervated and mercurial as their hosts' work is brooding and suffused with sleepy menace.

Nonhorse

Haraam, Circle Of Flame

RELEASE THE BATS CD

Nonhorse is the solo project of Wooden Wand & The Vanishing Voice member Gabriel Lucas

Crane. This album is already being labelled 'cassette-core' in some quarters, and while very few things are more guaranteed to raise this writer's hackles than the continual deployment of that odious suffix, for once it serves as an apt description of what's on offer. Crane cuts and pastes sounds found on old cassettes into short pieces with no obvious methodology, just letting layer after layer of wow, flutter, noise and hiss built up like silt. Each piece ends with an abrupt cut, adding to the fuck-you nature of the endeavour. It can be a riveting listen; its sounds seem to be reaching out from the past, seeking release from their dusty archives. But in the end the lack of any organising principle applied to such a vast quantity of material is the album's undoing.

Pete Swanson

Static Space

ROOT STRATA CD-R

As one half of Yellow Swans and the disc masterer of choice for the American noise underground, Swanson's profile is pretty high at present. Indeed, he's responsible for the mastering of a number of albums featured here this month. *Static Space* is as assured a solo excursion as you would expect. Hooking up two distortion pedals into his mixer, he allows the signal to feed back on itself, with minimal interference on his part. OK, it's hardly the most original concept – one would assume that Swanson knows his *Metal Machine Music* and his *Soliloquy For Lilith* – but each of the four (very different) drone pieces sounds wonderful, and complement one another perfectly. The final ten-minute stretch of silvery hiss and distant wisps and groans of feedback is subtly disorientating and unfathomably disturbing, a more hushed but equally powerful proposition as the best work of his parent group, such as the *Psychic Secession* album.

John Watermann

Calcutta Gas Chamber

DIE STADT LP

An extravagantly presented picture disc reissue of the late German born Australian's most controversial work, inspired by a visit to a disused site in India where state executions had previously taken place. Photographs of corpses and track titles like "The Shredding Of Human Tissue" make Watermann's intentions clear: by contextualising his source material in such a precise way, it's diametrically opposed to the (post-Pierre Schaeffer, almost universally held) principle that sound needn't refer to anything but its own materiality. This, plus the obvious grisliness of the theme, has led to it being labelled an Industrial or Dark Ambient piece. It's difficult to see the work as anything other than a (possibly irresponsible?) satire on ghoulish human curiosity masquerading as an interest in transgressive art. The music is pretty good, however: discreetly processed machine sounds that stand up well today despite the 15 years that have passed since its original release. □

The Inner Sleeve Artwork selected this month by Jem Finer



The Mothers Of Invention Weasels Ripped My Flesh

BIZARRE/REPRISE LP 1970
DESIGN BY NEON PARK

There was a time when there were no mobile phones doubling as lo-fi ghetto blasters, nor the hi-hat hiss of headphone spill. In the early 1970s public displays of musical taste were silent and visual, and the greatcoated youth of my teenage years could be seen parading their favourite records around town, tucked, cover facing outwards, under one arm.

It's questionable whether an album was chosen due to a genuine interest in the music or for the purpose of asserting a degree of individuality, both in respect to the adult world and to one's peers, which is perhaps how I came to find myself attracted to a record

whose cover depicted a man shaving himself with a weasel.

On the front of the September 1956 issue of the men's adventure magazine *Man's Life* was a painting of a screaming man, torso bare and bleeding, standing waist high in water as he fights a host of rabid weasels. The picture was an illustration for the story *Weasels Ripped My Flesh*, and Zappa allegedly showed this to the artist Neon Park and asked him, "What can you do that's worse than this?"

His response was to paint a parody of a shaving advertisement in which a generic American male smiles while shaving with a strange hybrid electric weasel/razor. Missing its back legs, the hind parts of this cyborg weasel sandwich a switch and flex, while the front half is all animal, wearing a bemused

expression, as if surprised and somewhat horrified to find itself gouging chunks out of the man's face. In contrast, he seems to be enjoying his shave, beaming as his right cheek is lacerated by the weasel's claws and teeth.

There is an ambiguity in the man's expression. Part of my abiding fascination with the painting to this day is whether his slightly sinister and off-kilter ad-man grin is one of masochistic satisfaction, or whether his eyes are glinting due to an altered state in which he hallucinates the metamorphosis of his razor.

The cover gnaws at one's imagination. There is no hint of sound save for the cartoon "rzzzzz!" speech bubble (again ambiguity: is it the razor's buzz or the man himself, perhaps suggesting to the weasel a more suitable sound than the shrill shriek one might imagine

such a creature making?). In its silence, the mysteries of the music within deepen.

Turning the album over, the track titles amplify the bizarre intensity of the front cover — "Prelude To The Afternoon Of A Sexually Aroused Gas Mask", "My Guitar Wants To Kill Your Mama", "Weasels Ripped My Flesh"... along with the grainy black and white photos of Zappa, staring wide eyed behind his ample moustache, the titles complete a circuit, sparking intense curiosity. What is this record? What does it sound like?

The cover's twist on advertising functions perfectly, both as a work of art and as an advertisement for itself. Rzzzzz! □ Musician/artist/sound sculptor Jem Finer performs at the Cheltenham Science Festival (Cheltenham Town Hall, 6 June) and Faster Than Sound (Bentwaters Airbase, Suffolk, 9 June)

Print Run New music books: devoured, dissected, dissed



"The return of rock": Hüsker Dü

Bring The Noise: 20 Years Of Writing About Hip Rock And Hip Hop

Simon Reynolds

FABER & FABER £14.99 PBK

Following his definitive study of the post-punk era, *Rip It Up And Start Again*, this collection of Reynolds's journalism and, later, essays on his blog, takes up where that tome left off – in 1985, ironically, at the point when Reynolds became a music journalist himself.

Bring The Noise is a loosely themed narrative of two and a bit decades of rock/pop history. The "noise" of which the author speaks isn't of the Merzbow variety, but the clamour when black and white musics clash and merge, and also when leftfield insurgents crash the pop party, disrupting but at the same time reinfusing the mainstream. As we shall see, the latter really doesn't happen any more, thanks to the keenly honed skills of risk aversion developed by today's growing legions of marketing people. No one has concerned themselves with all of this more consistently, cogently and closely than Reynolds. Indeed, as well as monitoring trends, he's been as near as a music journo can get to kickstarting them.

1985 was certainly a bleak time to be starting up as a rock writer. Post-punk had run its dialectical course, notions of further punk-like insurrections seemed improbable in the face of the 80s' accommodating diversity and triumphantly stupefying blandness. No one seemed sure what was going to happen next

and the very act of over-anxiously looking out for the Next Big Thing seemed only to exacerbate the certainty that pop and rock's proverbial watched kettle was unlikely to boil.

Reynolds's earliest writings, including a piece here from *Monitor*, the Oxford based 'fanzone' to which both he and I contributed, articulate this lack. Shrewdly, Reynolds doesn't attack 80s popsters for their fakery or superficiality. The likes of Howard Jones, he writes, are passionate, sincere and soulful – it's just that their souls are mediocre. A line like this confirms that before he was even published, Reynolds had found his critical voice. An endearing aspect to this collection is that the author appends short paragraphs looking back on his pieces from a 2007 perspective, sometimes self-deprecatingly. Yet despite occasional modifications, epiphanies and recantations over the years, Reynolds's voice has remained fundamentally constant and therefore authoritative.

On joining *Melody Maker*, Reynolds initially concentrated much of his fire on rival NME's earnest persistence with what one of their writers dubbed "soul-cialism", as embodied by groups like The Redskins and The Christians, a wishful yoking together of "authentically" retrograde, cod-black music and left wing politics which the author frequently dismantled, as in a Redskins review reprinted here. However, things were starting to happen. There was a recrudescence of indie pop to which Reynolds pays rather greater and more

eloquent tribute than perhaps is deserved in a piece called *Younger Than Yesterday*. This was a complaint sometimes levelled at Reynolds – that the quality of his prose sometimes outdid the quality of the music it extolled – and certainly, the piece in question holds up better than the music it celebrates.

By 1987, things were starting to happen. There was a resurgence in (particularly) American rock, though groups like The Sugarcubes and The Young Gods offered a European angle on rock's late 80s reanimation. Big Black and The Butthole Surfers were among those reinflating rock and exploding the once perky, now hoary objection of 'rockism'. In a manifesto-like live review of Hüsker Dü, Reynolds caught the new thing in the air with a deliberately blunt phrase: "The return of rock". And lo, it happened.

Unlike fellow fans of groups like The Smiths, however, Reynolds was never troubled by black music. He was, he writes, "unable and unwilling to choose between The Smiths and Public Enemy". In his unabashedly fascinated essays on early hiphop, Reynolds tackles head-on rather than ducks the braggadocio and sexism of the music he loves, on the one hand admitting that this indecently troubling aspect of the music is part of its thrill, while also observing that much of the machismo derives from the African-American experience of being "unmanned" in the 20th century.

While never abandoning rock music – there are interviews here with Morrissey,

PJ Harvey and Radiohead – Reynolds's middle and more recent career has seen him gravitate towards the various, subterranean strands of dance culture – first rave, then Jungle/drum 'n' bass and more recently Grime. As this collection shows, it's extraordinary that despite relocating to America in the early 90s, Reynolds was among the first journalists to spot and write about these UK-derived phenomena. As he has grown older, he has tended to focus more narrowly on these subgenres, perhaps having given up hope of any late equivalent insurgency to the late 80s. What's underground nowadays stays underground.

Reynolds does not please everybody. Some find him too dry and forensic, too un-rock 'n' roll. Others bridle at his more cerebral citations. Often this tells you more about the reactionary nature of his critics than Reynolds – those who buy into a romantic notion of rock as feral, spontaneous, irreflectively passionate and 'magical', and who resent the light he sheds on its workings and structures. You sense this at times in the wariness of his interviewees. However, in its sheer intellectual energy and generosity, its elegant acuity and yet the unmistakeable sense that this is written not from de haut but from the en bas position of a helpless fan, Bring The Noise amounts to the most complete and convincing account of what's been happening in music these last two decades.

DAVID STUBBS



ECM icon: Keith Jarrett's Köln Concert (1975)

**Horizons Touched:
The Music Of ECM**
Steve Lake & Paul Griffiths
(Editors)

GRANTA HBK £45

Pretty much like *The Wire* itself, the ECM label has effectively created its own culture. It is one of those rare cultural primes that can only be defined by reference to its own formidable and capacious values. For nearly 40 years, since Manfred Eicher initiated the imprint with Mal Waldron's *Free At Last*, ECM has been one of the most distinguished marques in contemporary music, combining the loyally collegiate approach of Blue Note with the attention to detail that used to be characteristic of Deutsche Grammophon.

The only generalisation that can be made about 'the music of ECM', the ostensible subject of this magnificent book, is that no generalisation is possible, or rather that any generalised description instantly conjures up half a dozen counter-examples. Too European? The Art Ensemble! Hal Russell! Don Cherry! Too limpid? Don Cherry! Hal Russell! The Art Ensemble! Too highbrow? You get the picture. There's no point any longer taxing that old debate about 'the ECM sound', not least because one of the editors of *Horizons Touched* has offered the label a fresh set of sound values on records by, among others, Roscoe Mitchell, Joe and Mat Maneri and Paul Bley (and they're not European or limpid either). The only way the ECM aesthetic can be mapped is by a Venn diagram of converging and overlapping areas of concern, embracing changes jazz, free jazz, electronica, folk forms, dance, theatre and film music, Ambient, classical composition and New Music. Factor into that some intriguing singletons, like Bruno Ganz reading Hölderlin and *The Waste Land*, an audio-only transcription of a Godard film, or Robin Williamson's free folk trilogy, and then see the two-dimensional picture given substance by such monumental successes as Keith Jarrett's *The Köln Concert* and Jan Garbarek & The Hilliard Ensemble's *Officium*. Few of the artists most closely associated with ECM – Garbarek, John Abercrombie, Keith Jarrett, John Surman, Tomasz Stanko, Arvo Pärt – were absolutely shaped by it, but it would be hard to imagine those careers without Manfred Eicher's steering hand. Guitarist Steve Tibbetts is one of the vanishing few who

got a contract as an unknown on the basis of sending a tape in. Almost everyone else had already crossed some critical threshold before being asked to add a number to that steadily rising roster, more than 1000 records when you factor in the New Series, JAPO, Watt/Xtrawatt, and the Egberto Gismonti-dominated Carmo.

This is a book that perhaps could only have been written or prepared from the inside. Steve Lake is the label's co-pilot. Paul Griffiths has also contributed texts to ECM projects, and he writes a powerful tribute to Eicher here, written in 'Ophelian', using only words spoken by Ophelia in Hamlet. Eicher's own methods are sometimes inscrutable, but he knows a hawk from a handsaw and his ears are unchallengeable, particularly when, as Meredith Monk notes, he opts for an "imperfect" take over a "correct" one when the musicality is better served.

I say music is the 'ostensible' subject, because this is really a book about and by the people of ECM, the engineers, designers, photographers, composers and musicians who have contributed to its complex history. There is, predictably, not much in the way of criticism and Lake's interview with Eicher is really more of a conversation, as one might reasonably expect. One might expect more of the cover art that has made ECM so collectable, even in the CD era, but that was already the subject of a book, *Sleeves Of Desire*, which it's nice to keep open alongside this. As a celebration, rather than a critical study, it can't be faulted. Short testimonies are interspersed with longer thematic essays – "ECM And The Guitar", "Northbound: ECM And The Idea Of North", "Sound And Vision: ECM And Film" – and the prevailing impression is that what makes the label's aesthetic so unique and powerful is that it is not constrained by jazz or classical idioms or even by music in general, but partakes richly of a far wider culture, with radio, film, theatre, science, sometimes politics, ideas and images above all, subtly admixed.

It's a large, magnificent book, presented with a slipcase and with a moody, evanescent cityscape of Munich at dawn or sunset on the cover. Perhaps there still remains the task of writing a critical history of ECM, but for the moment this is every fan's dream.

BRIAN MORTON

**Pathways To Unknown Worlds:
Sun Ra, El Saturn And Chicago's
Afro-Futurist Underground
1954–68**

Anthony Elms/John Corbett/
Terry Kapsalis (Editors)

WHITE WALLS/UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
PBK £16

This is the second book drawn from Chicago based critic John Corbett's extensive Sun Ra archives and it is far more approachable than the earlier collection, which compiled Ra's sometimes impenetrable polemical broadsides. This volume focuses on visual work – El Saturn album designs by Claude Dangerfield, Leroy Butler and others, plus component design parts and various other ephemera. It looks incredible, especially some of Dangerfield's unused cover art – pastel evocations of a tiki-space future with an Afro-Disney flair.

Some of the text seems slightly unrelated to the matters at hand, but the essays by Corbett and Adam Abraham (son of Ra's longtime business partner, Alton Abraham) are very good and help set the scene. But most revelatory, perhaps, are Alton's sketches of an El Saturn Wisdom Research Culture Art Foundation building, presumably to be raised along a prominent section of Chicago's skyline.

Sun Ra and Abraham had big dreams, dreams that went far beyond music, embracing the infinite possibilities of an eternally expanding universe. Their attempts to codify this may look a little corny to contemporary eyes (the largest known cache of Ra material was uncovered as part of a scavenger hunt for space kitsch), but its visionary brilliance will become plain to anyone who takes the time to look at it with the wonder it deserves.

BYRON COLEY

Old time heroes: A Robert Crumb trading card



WEEMS STRING BAND

**R Crumb's Heroes Of
Blues, Jazz & Country**
R Crumb

HARRY N ABRAMS HBK+CD £10.95

Robert Crumb, father of the underground comics movement and creator of the immortal Mr Natural and Fritz The Cat, had already spent some of his early career making comic trading cards for Topps Bubblegum at their factory on the Brooklyn waterfront. In 1980 he re-introduced the concept of the trading card via Yazoo Records, owned at that time by his friend Nick Perls. Yazoo had taken the baton from Bill Givens's Origin Jazz Library, and continued to issue retrieved recordings of pre-war Country blues music, at that time long unavailable in any form and repressed from collectors' 78s. The idea was to issue one card at a time with each record release. Perls picked up the idea and ran with it, issuing a full 36-card *Heroes Of The Blues* set. Early Jazz Greats and Pioneers Of Country Music followed. Compared with the scant album sales, the trading cards were a roaring success, and ran into several editions before the label changed hands following the death

of the owner. Although the images were drawn from studio or family photographs, somehow Blind Lemon looks more doleful, Skip James more tortured and Peetie Wheatstraw more devilish. Although Blind Willie McTell is now known to a million Bob Dylan fans, back then he was a little more obscure, but Crumb seems to take a delight in celebrating even the darkest recesses of the collectors' cupboards in capturing the likes of Rube Lacey, who recorded two sides for Paramount but was a key influence on the slide style developed by Son House or Mumford Bean and his Itawambians, who released two shellacs of old-time waltzes before disappearing into the hills. But to romanticise this music into some frozen tableau of Western exotica would be a grave mistake, for here we can find the true lifeblood of much 20th century music. This beautifully bound volume – including an introduction by Crumb director Terry Zwigoff – will drive readers through the accompanying CD and into the still waiting arms of the Yazoo and County record labels, where much of this wonderful music can still be found.

STEVE BARKER

On Screen Films & DVDs

TJ Norris

TriMIX

INNOVA CD+DVD

It's fitting that artist TJ Norris's multifaceted Tribryd cycle (ongoing since 2003) has resulted in such a range of documentation. The project's focus has been on the shifting textures and peripheral, overlooked layers of urban space: flaking handbills and posters, the hurried scrawl of a spraycan on concrete, or the worn and chipped façade of an abandoned building. As Norris knows, you never step into the same street twice. Hence TriMIX, a selection of remixes from the preceding Tribryd: Installation Soundtrack (Beta-Lactam Ring 2003), plus four short videos utilising those original sounds.

Music heightens the meandering experience of the would-be flaneur, turning a walk into a piece of personal cinema. The work of composers such as Scanner, Rapoon and Asmus Tietchens served as "basic sensory inspiration" for the artist as he photographed locations in and

around the Pacific Northwest region of America. Here, the car-horn hum of Rapoon's "Gal-fel" is transposed to gliding, melancholy guitar. Scanner's "Continuum" has been pared of its central, insistent pulse; in its place little patches of dry static feather out across the stereophonic space like a dot map of radio transmission towers. Miles Chalcraft's "Symbiont" takes a step back, presenting a Berlin travelogue that jumps from iron bridges to neo-classical sculptures, and then to a first-person shooter game with the iconic Mercedes Benz logo overlaid in sickly green. Creating an unsettling visual proximity between the tourist and the predatory killer, "Symbiont" is soundtracked by the suitably splenetic beats of Matthew Adkins. Aside from this latter piece, there's nothing here that particularly jumps out at viewer or listener, but that's probably intentional. TriMIX adds another stratum to Norris's hybrid approach: contemplative, rather than intrusive.

EMMY HENNINGS

Gang Gang Dance

Retina Riddim

THE SOCIAL REGISTRY CD+DVD

Retina Riddim is a 33 minute film being released as a DVD with other visual and sound material related to Brooklyn art rockers Gang Gang Dance. Not a tour film, documentary or live video, and, despite having been made by group member and practising artist Brian DeGraw, nor is it an art film – or so insists the press release. The film mainly consists of raw, collaged or manipulated visual material that's too varied to document anything in particular. DeGraw compiled audio material from the group's archives from 2003 to the present, and arranged and assembled the video elements together in response to the soundtrack. The result is similar to Gang Gang Dance's music; energetic, sprawling and diverse to the point of incoherence and with a touch of urban drift.

Gang Gang Dance's reluctance to call it an art film is a different kind of claim. There is nothing about the film's form or content that

disqualifies it as an art film, and DeGraw could easily present it as part of his work. His choice not to do so reveals either a weariness for the art label or too much respect for it. The fact that the DVD includes a film by visual artist Oliver Payne, titled GGDbyOP, is a brave choice as it necessarily leads to comparisons between both works. The style of Payne's film is similar to the acclaimed Mixtape, a film he made with Nick Relph in 2002 to a soundtrack of Terry Riley's tape piece You're No Good. For this film the Gang Gang Dance sound drives the visuals, but these are allowed to have a life of their own, sometimes following the music, sometimes drifting away and working as a counterpoint. In contrast, in Retina Riddim DeGraw's film editing never allows for a disagreement between sound and image – the visual rhythm that the title refers to is a direct transposition of a musical rhythm, and the images don't contribute much to it. After a few minutes, it's difficult to keep your eyes on the screen.

PABLO LAFUENTE



Stills from Retina Riddim



Scott Walker

Scott Walker

30 Century Man

DIR STEPHEN KIJAK 2006, 95 MINS

It begins, as a musical myth must, with Orpheus, the singer who crossed over to the Underworld, but was permitted to return to Earth and sing of what he found there. And then we are shown three fresh-faced, quiffed teenage boys performing a song called "Orpheus" in glorious black and white on an American pop show from 1965. Although he's not wearing shades, the singer is unmistakably Noel Engel, aka Scott Walker, the others his phantom 'brothers', Gary and John.

Stephen Kijak's documentary was still in production last spring, as Walker's record company 4AD was gearing up to promote his sensational album *The Drift*. Walker cooperated with the director to the extent of granting an interview, which is threaded throughout the film and instils his living presence in the movie. With so little moving archive footage available, especially from the period following the last of his four Scott LPs in the early 70s, the film does remarkably well to hold the attention, with specially commissioned animated sequences to accompany his music, and creative use of rostrum camera on a variety of stills and memorabilia. They were also assiduous in tracking down appropriate interviewees, including Ed Bicknell, Walker's manager at Virgin; Cally Callomon, compiler of various box sets (interviewed in what looks like a rural petrol station); Angela Morley, formerly Wally Stott, Scott's 60s string arranger; and saxophonist Evan Parker, about his role in the 1984 album *Climate Of Hunter*.

Whenever Walker releases an album now, the formula for press coverage tends to be 80 per cent rehash of The Walker Brothers story plus Scott 1–4; 20 per cent cursory mention of new LP with eyebrow-raised asides about 'demented' genius. Mercifully, *30 Century Man* fails to observe this rubric – Kijak clearly entertains total respect for Walker's more recent work, and the life up to 1978's *Nite Flights* is despatched in 50 minutes or so. Although he fails to nail exactly what switches were flipped in Walker's head to make him write such songs as "The Electrician" and "Fat Mama Kick" at that moment, the film shifts to a new gear after this, and Walker's three 'black

albums', *Climate*, *Tilt* and *The Drift*, are analysed in detail in the remaining half of the movie.

The crew were lucky enough to be allowed to film some of the *Drift* sessions at Metropolis Studios and capture the building of the giant percussion 'box', the delivery of the pork belly which is pummelled to evoke Mussolini's corpse during "Clara", and Walker himself, swallowed by the black circle of his mic popshield like a blob in a Francis Bacon painting, recording the apocalyptic vocal of "Jesse". As producer Pete Walsh reveals, Walker does not describe the desired end result to the musicians or even the producer – these songs are recorded with all participants in a darkened labyrinth, with a severely reduced field of vision.

The film's main drawback, though, is its fashionable insistence on 'celebrity' endorsements over detailed analysis. Brian Eno, Jarvis Cocker, and even David Bowie (the film's Executive Producer) all have interesting thoughts or anecdotes, but Dot Allison, Damon Albarn, Alison Goldfrapp, Richard Hawley, Cathal Coughlan and Neil Hannon all commandeer valuable celluloid time merely to offer unstinting praise, like fleas hymning a lion. There's a particularly cringy filler middle section where these people are filmed listening reverently to a track and trying to supply a commentary, or just sitting in awestruck, mouth-breathing silence. Dissent comes from Marc Almond, who redundantly announces he didn't like *Tilt*. But so what? The time would have been better used in discussion of Walker's gnomic lyrics, for example, which are praised as great poetry by Eno, compared with Eliot, Joyce and Beckett by Artangel's Michael Morris, and flashed up on screen, but with no attempt at contextualisation.

Still, there's enough insight and guarded revelation here to while away 95 minutes, and the power of this autumnal phase of the singer's bizarre career is undimmed even by footage of an anoraked Scott conducting his score on the set of Leos Carax's *Pola X*. Hector Zazou captures the mystique nicely in his description of the image that comes to his mind when listening to *Tilt* and *The Drift*: a man singing in the dark, with no one there to hear him.

ROB YOUNG

On Site Exhibitions, performance art, installations, etc

Optronica

BFI SOUTH BANK
LONDON, UK

Labelling itself the UK's premier audio-visual art festival, Optronica, now in its second season, has cemented its status as a hotspot for showcasing established AV/VJ talent and propelling the next bright young things. This year's four day event also coincides with the relaunch of the National Film Theatre complex, which, as a bittersweet irony in this celebration of music and the moving image, has sullied the old site of the Museum of the Moving Image with a hollow, 'metal look' centre foyer.

Of the British contingent, graphic designer and former Output label owner Trevor Jackson opens the festival with a premiere of RGBPM, assisted by two laptop-staring tech wizards whose task it is to feed the animations in real time into the visual fray. The mutating sequence of parallelograms folding into each other and then churning out new geometric dimensions imparts a life of its own to the pulsating skeletal Techno beat. The raw materials are nothing particularly awe-inspiring, but Jackson stuns all with this basic, inventive manipulation.

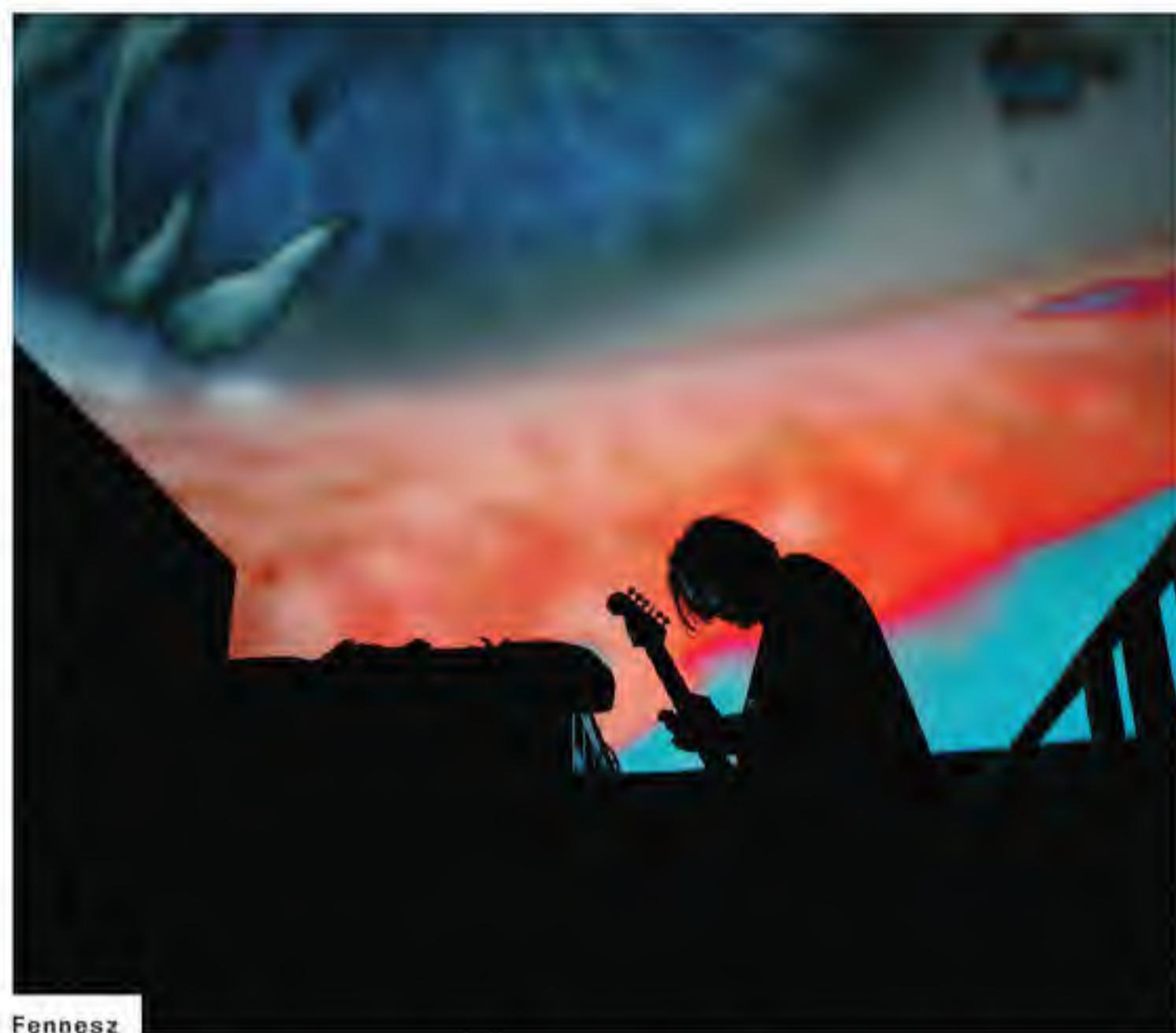
Infinitely more accessible, Lemon Jelly's Nick Franglen and Fred Deakin weave a similar palette to Jackson, the visuals tumbling up and down to the contortions of the music. Connoisseurs of their mid-90s output would infer that their imaginative animations and flamboyant dreamscapes paved the way for the likes of Air and Gorillaz. Sometimes, the music collapses into deceptively simple House, only kept afloat by the screensaver mode visuals. At its most captivating, though, their IOTA: Inventions Of The Abstract flutters like a multicoloured flag, snaking its way over insurmountable cliffs of 3D graphics.

Fresh from their residency at the NASA Space Sciences Laboratories, Semiconductor's Sonic Inc floats rough-hewn diamond encrusted kaleidoscopes created in real time on their AV software decks to a kinetic soundtrack, a prismatic duel of visual slabs. Their Brilliant Noise reworking is yet more commanding and aurally punishing. Collated from solar imaging data from their Houston internship, the powerful black and white images of gushing spittles off the Sun's crust are matched by a hot, fuzzy sonic grind akin to being stuck in a detuned TV.

Next is the highly anticipated collaboration between Fennesz and Charles Atlas. Paired with Atlas's emotive, sensuous, gauzy model faces haunting the giant IMAX screen, Fennesz's deft accommodation of keyboards, guitars and samplers simmers into a masterful showcase.

Friday's unfortunate scheduling clash between Peter Greenaway's sold out Tulse Luper Live VJ performance and Optronica Lab does nevertheless allow the ticketless few to cross over to the NFT to witness some of this year's young guns in action, only to be bowled over senseless by the genial trickery of the Reactable duo. Locked in a strange game with glowing chess-like tokens over a translucent board designed at the University of Barcelona's Music Technology Group, a split projection screens the two players in action. Each move detonates different 'audio topologies' from an internal modular synthesizer depending on which parameters are keyed in, which are then projected onto the tabletop from the inside. The mind boggles as to where to watch.

The crowd's sense of disbelief seems to have subsided a little by the time Rechenzentrum step on stage. By far the most diverse and puzzling act of the night, the Berlin duo employ



Fennesz

stochastic symmetries and Burroughs-style cut-ups to alternate tense, heartstopping build-ups with cryogenic, sidereal thrills.

Saturday's Big In Japan session lays down a stark realisation that, despite the tech-addled innovation of the Western crop, Japan remains irrevocably ahead in terms of its pioneering technology, its zaniness and a cultivation of the imagination which springboards fugitive minds to a limitless set of possibilities. The choice cut of animated videos screened, from the likes of Hideaki Motoki's wild dragon stroll and Enlightenment's foray into the demented world of Japanese TV gameshows point towards

a fertile ground for budding film makers in the mould of controversial Japanese director Takashi Miike.

In that respect, Ryoichi Kurokawa's set comes to crown Optronica on a sensorial high. Strobed on a cross-playing split screen with sumptuous naturalistic images, synchronising their metamorphic hues to the field recordings, Kurokawa's performance reads like a file retrieved from the archives of the human brain: how the senses interact to see sounds, listen to images and read three-dimensional debris to piece up memory. Bow to the master.

RICHIE RUCHPAUL

Future Of Sound

ROYAL COLLEGE OF ART
LONDON, UK

The future is not what it used to be. Back in 1996 in London, Howie B, Brian Eno, Scanner, DJ Spooky, David Toop and Peter Gabriel debated future strategies for sound at an event called Hypersymposium: The Future Of Music. A lively discussion ensued, with, like most guessing games, very little substance. This time around, at the Future Of Sound symposium, which has toured the UK and tonight settled at London's Royal College Of Art, the future comes in the form of a series of strictly timed 15 minute show-and-tell tasters by a wide range of disparate artists, which may or may not have something to do with a perceived conception of what lies ahead. The symposium is curated and organised by former Human League and Heaven 17 frontman Martin Ware's company Illustrious, which in turn is set up with fellow 80s pop proponent Vince Clarke from Erasure. Illustrious, we are told, is a company supplying surround sound, installations and various sonic solutions to those who may need it. Ware is a

jovial and enthusiastic host and timekeeper of proceedings, but his own presentation, riddled with buzzwords such as "immersive hybrid", "sonology" and "3D sonic imaging", smack too much of sales pitch bluster for comfort.

In stark contrast to Ware's enthusiasm for new technology is Touch label's Jon Wozencroft, who issues a contemplative warning against digital compression and distracted music consumption. His 15 minutes is used as a call for listening rather than guzzling sound. Troika, a London based art and design unit make a playful presentation about the interdisciplinary use of digital and analogue electronics which they dub "digitalogic". Demonstrating devices that disclose hidden sounds such as the audio of pure digital data, the sound of neon lights and scanners, the squelches and blips recall Oval. Troika have also devised a way of listening to "the magnetic reality of objects", amplifying the sounds of electromagnetic radiation – which is exactly what Christina Kubisch does with her Electrical Walks.

Writer and researcher Paul Devereux gives a fascinating presentation, not about the future

but the ancient past. Exploring the sound qualities of ancient archaeological sites – a practice he dubs "archaeo-acoustics" – leads him to the conclusion that the sonic properties of some stones – 'ringing rocks', extreme echoes, reverberating stalactites and stalagmites – were prevalent in numerous ancient rituals. Particularly revealing was his discovery that the frequency of 111 Hz stimulated the brain's right-hand pre-frontal cortex – the area associated with trance, imagination and meditation – and many reverberations found in the archaeological sites, or that which occurred when a human voice chanted inside a cave, for example, vibrated at exactly that frequency.

Luciana Hall's entertaining showcase involved amplification of specific brainwaves and illustrated their activity using triggered samples. Sonifying the human brain is an idea interesting enough in itself – and one that has been explored previously by composers such as Alvin Lucier and Arne Nordheim. Hall's premise is that all humans have differing brain activity and as such will trigger a different 'melody'. Unfortunately the samples used

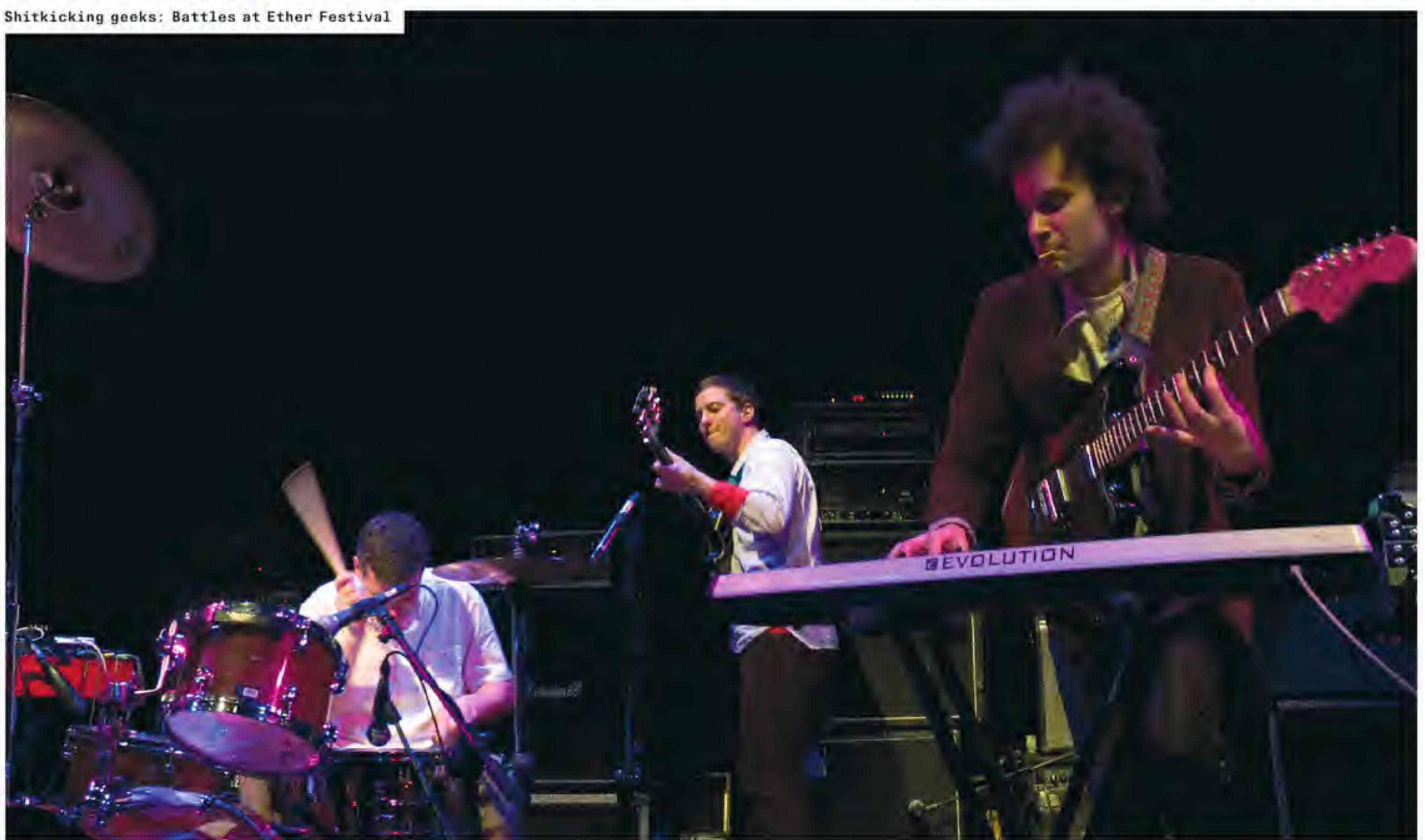
were dull and generic, and the resulting 'composition', although interestingly triggered, sounded like third rate Ambient drip. Artist Brian Duffy's immensely engaging session demonstrated how his attempt to listen to the stars using his invented 'optophonic lunascope', by a complicated science-riddled mental detour, is the key to understanding his Modified Toy Orchestra. Mathias Gmachl, of Farmers Manual, made a magnificently articulate presentation of his work with textile artist Rachel Wingfield after a longwinded introduction about the work of Buckminster Fuller and Frei Otto. He advocated geometry as an essential experience and urged the bringing together of knowledge to create universities, a point where all our enquiries would intersect, instead of the current diversities prying knowledge apart. A case in point is his and Wingfield's Sonumbra installation in Sunderland, described as a giant "sonic shade of light" combining textiles, sound, solar energy and sculpture into a giant, beautiful umbrella lighting up and composing a private opus as you move under it.

ANNE HILDE NESET

Sunn O))) at Borealis Festival



Shitkicking geeks: Battles at Ether Festival



On Location Live and kicking: festivals, concerts, events in the flesh

Borealis Festival

VARIOUS VENUES
BERGEN, NORWAY

Now in its fourth year, Borealis looks set to become a major event in the international festival calendar. Despite recent funding cuts, and the fact that it's timetabled to coincide with some of the wettest weather since biblical times, the enthusiastic organisers have created a network of performances, installations and incidents that connect together along deft lines of association, making imaginative use of the city's venues. Which is no bad thing in a place dripping with black umbrellas, where even the ducks on Lake Lungegårdsvann seem to have given up the fight for life.

The theme for Borealis 2007 is Navigation In The Dark; but it's up to you what route you take through the lashing rain. A good place to start is undoubtedly Banks Violette's specially commissioned installation in the Bergen Kunsthall. Violette, a friend of festival headliners Sunn O))) who in one recent exhibition cast the Metal group's stage equipment in salt, has often focused on Black Metal imagery. This time he greets his visitors with a dangling chandelier of white fluorescent tubes, offset by an overturned black plastic chair, its edges permanently consumed by a fringe of live flames: a cheery vision of hell rendered all the more

welcoming by the damp icy wind strafing the streets outside. Alternatively, you can scurry across the square to Bergen's Central Library, where an exhibition documents the life of Italian composer Luigi Nono, whose electroacoustic works are featured in the festival. Either way, you are now perfectly aligned to appreciate Friday night's programme, which begins in the Logen Theatre with a solo recital by violin virtuoso Garth Knox, featuring Klaus Hüber's exquisite Plainte For Luigi Nono and the stark, haunting Vent Nocturne, for violin and live electronics by Finnish composer Kaija Saariaho. One of the first women to break into IRCAM's male dominated arena, Saariaho has been invited to conduct seminars and master classes on her work during the day as well supervising an extensive selection of her electroacoustic pieces in the evenings.

Meanwhile, back at the Kunsthall, Finnish experimental Speed Metal duo Pymathon are pulverising the Landmark performance space with an exhilarating blend of flailing guitar feedback and precision drumming, their set climaxing in a barrage of chugging power chords and flying drumsticks. Next up is probably the best kept secret of the entire festival: Finnish electro punks K-X-P, making only their second live appearance since debuting in Helsinki at last year's Avanto. The

trio successfully layer meandering space sounds over Hardcore dance rhythms with devastating effect.

Oslo based artist Are Mokkelbost doesn't wait for the sun to go down before starting the next evening's programme. Blinds are drawn at the Landmark against the last of the sunlight, while he gears up for a solo performance as Single Unit: an impressive live mix of electronics, flashing lights and slashing Metal riffs that felt considerably louder than it actually was.

Back at the Logen, the rest of the evening is dedicated to chamber works by Saariaho: the first of a set of instrumental solos with live electronics and video projections, the second an 'all star' celebration of her work by some of her finest interpreters, including cellist Anssi Karttunen, who worked closely with Saariaho in developing her characteristic approach to harmonics. The human scale of these pieces can often be deceptive, her works betraying a strange intimacy that can suddenly give way to great primeval spaces.

What's left of the night belongs to white Eurotrash dance as Italodisco pioneers Alexander Robotnick and Casco deliver back to back DJ sets, heavy on the vocoder choruses, drum computers and arm waving. This is the missing link between electro and House, and not a soul can resist. Outside, a fine mist hangs over the hills surrounding

Bergen, making them look as if they're on fire. Tomorrow we all go to church.

Bergen Cathedral may not be the largest place of worship you'll ever see, but it boasts a mighty set of pipes in its organ loft and a highly discriminating policy on who gets to perform there. The cannonball embedded in its façade, left there by Dutch pirates in the 18th century, also suggests the place shouldn't be underestimated either. It's taken delicate negotiation to obtain permission for Sunn O))) to close the festival with a performance at the cathedral altar. Even so, the entire establishment had to be cleared of sound equipment for Mass on Sunday morning. Afternoon recitals by cellist Anssi Karttunen and organist Tor Grønn explored the cathedral's interior as an acoustic space and a sacred one: Grønn's spirited readings from Messiaen's *Livre D'Orgue* felt as if he weren't so much playing the organ as the entire building. It was left to Sunn O))), however, to transform Bergen Cathedral into a vast granite speaker cabinet. Joined by Mayhem guest vocalist Attila Csihar, Lasse Marhaug and Tos Nieuwenhuizen on Moogs, and Earth's Steve Moore at the cathedral organ, Greg Anderson and Stephen O'Malley took a packed congregation down into the primordial depths of amplified sound, and body cavities resonated in time with the cathedral's darkened interior.

KEN HOLLINGS

Ether Festival

SOUTH BANK CENTRE
LONDON, UK

The Ether Festival is a dozen adventurous events scattered across March at London's South Bank Centre. Coldcut, Blixa Bargeld, Tunng and Nurse With Wound all contribute. The hard rump of classical fans still turning up at the Queen Elizabeth Hall for highbrow delights must be finding the foyer increasingly educational, as they run the gauntlet of Goths, beatniks and panting vocal beatboxers. Most of the QEII foyer space has been revamped and relabelled The Front Room, and it's here that Seb Rochford's Fulborn Teversham perform on a late Friday afternoon. If drummer Rochford's numerous projects are making you dizzy – he is a member of Acoustic Ladyland, Polar Bear, Oriole, Menlo Park and many other groups – Fulborn Teversham is the one where Nic Ramm's circus keyboards and Alice Grant's chilled punk vocals collide with the eloquent skronk of Pete Wareham's tenor sax. Over the past year the group's confidence has grown by leaps and bounds, and this is a splendid live show without an ounce of spare fat.

Arrangements are stripped back – Ramm has to get through the first hectic number almost entirely solo, to weirdly comic effect – and an anti-noodling ban is clearly in force. Faster tunes are played as if circus horses are galloping around a ring, and Rochford is adept at this racing style. Loud is properly loud, and quiet is astonishingly delicate. Several melodies are empty and understated,

while a mellotron keyboard evokes a Robert Wyatt melancholy. When Alice Grant eventually joins in she displays the same dynamic range, one minute throwing her head back and belting out "I'm Amazing", the next tiptoeing into a vanishing waltz. This is a group that deploys wit and cunning rather than a powerhouse jazz approach.

The following evening Mira Calix takes to the stage in the Purcell Room with a minimally lit trio of laptop, viola and cello. Unlikely as it seems, Calix – a DJ turned composer originally from South Africa – is becoming a bit of a Benjamin Britten for our times. Living in the remote Suffolk countryside, she has a strong feel for her locality, making field recordings of woodland or melting snow, to be incorporated in her work. Increasingly she involves classical instruments – piano, clarinet, strings – among her prickly electronics, and now Britten's own Aldeburgh Festival has commissioned an opera with libretto by Blake Morrison (who worked with Gavin Bryars on Doctor Ox's Experiment).

Tonight wistful snatches of a children's choir merge with the trickling icemelt and live string parts as Calix steers us on an intriguing meander through her new album, *Eyes Set Against The Sun*. Her music has a stubborn charm, the sound of someone determinedly exploring their own landscape and very personal agenda. A piano lament floats in and out of contact with the strings. A marimba plays mournfully, then seems to collapse in a woody tumble. Calix describes her method

as "a colouring-in principle". It's rather austere as a stage show – in a room as intimate as this, a word or two to the audience might not go amiss – but there's a subtle magic, especially when choir, strings and fragmented audio are layered up into denser moments.

What Battles share with Mira Calix is a penchant for loop machines; in fact Battles' sold out show works just fine as a masterclass in how to integrate live looping into barnstorming instrumental rock without looking like an idiot. At the centre of the tightly structured maelstrom sits ex-Helmet drummer John Stanier, his crash cymbal mounted a metre above his head, and an awesome combination of intellectual grasp and physical power. Around him loom a trio of lithe, slippery guitarists, two with keyboards and all three with loop machines. Furious riffs are spat out, looped, stacked and trashed. Tyondai Braxton plays guitar and keys simultaneously and layers harmony vocals into the raging texture. Stanier repeatedly sets himself the thankless task of drumming in with the loops, while letting it be known that he, rather than the machines, is in the driving seat. The results sound like Prince one moment, Steve Reich the next, and are technically always impressive. Battles can play in three keys at once, then pummel away in a triple guitar unison till it decelerates into darkness. "Shitkicking geeks!" splutters my companion.

Sunday afternoon sees the Human Beatbox Convention take over the foyer for workshops and seminars. Groups of bobbing enthusiasts

draw the ear as soon as you enter the building. On stage we admire the skills of Beardyman, Belgian champ RoxorLoops and even TV comedian Bill Bailey, who loves beatboxing as much as the next maniac. Bellatrix shows that Loop Station manipulation knows no gender boundaries, and employs her bass and trumpet to layer up a song with three part Italian harmonies. Otherwise it's strictly vocal, and South Bank artist in residence Shlomo eventually tips the excitable, squealing audience over the edge with his outrageous impression of a DJ scratching "I Want You Back" by The Jackson Five. As Shlomo, thrusting a second mic into his neck, proves how much bass you can generate from one human throat, the show veers from stand-up comic to music hall impressionist, reviving the 40s vogue for vocal imitation of instruments along the way.

Shlomo's timing, musical and comedic, is impeccable. As with early rap, his lyrics ("All the sounds come from the mouth") focus your attention rigorously on physical action. His wide eyed enthusiasm goes through the roof as he introduces his Vocal Orchestra, a 12-strong beatbox choir, stiffened by the inclusion of half a dozen Swingle Singers. This lot do everything: samba, salsa, Paul Simon's crowd-pleasing "You Can Call Me Al" and free Improv à la Butch Morris conductions. Shlomo looks like a kid who just got a choir for his birthday, and I can't remember when I last felt this entertained.

CLIVE BELL



Vashti Bashers at Gladtree

Gladtree Festival

VARIOUS VENUES
AMHERST, USA

The Gladtree Press is a small font of outsider goodness located in Western Massachusetts. Run by John Shaw (of The Believers and Son Of Earth), it has been responsible for books by Bill Nace, Matt Krefting and others. Shaw has also organised festivals based on and around the campus of his alma mater, Hampshire College. The most recent of these was a three day groovathon pitting noise monkeys against folk pixies with a few random oddballs and spoken word mooks tossed in for good measure.

The first night's event was held in an art gallery in Easthampton, immediately next door to a theatre hosting a performance of the rock musical Godspell. When Tusco Terror (an Akron based power electronics project conceived by a friend of the great Leslie Keffer) cranked it up, the promoter from next door came stumbling in as though he'd discovered he had a ferret attached to his penis. It looked great, and Shaw dispatched him with a priceless series of "What? What? I can't hear you, the music's too loud" gestures. It was a beautiful display of programmed confusion.

Most of the other highlights from the first night involved people with semi-local

connections. Tarp (an electronics duo featuring former Vermonster Josh Burkett and sometime Sunburned Hand Of The Man member Conrad Capistran) pelted attendees with a percussive set of plonking whatsis. It reminded more than one listener of a watching a ping-pong match, played by two guys with paddles clenched in their buttock cheeks. Current Northampton resident, Christina Carter, was equally captivating. Fresh from a Jandek sighting in Texas, Christina played with a wildly harsh amplifier tone and sang with an intense focus very different from her more ethereal work. It was a great, sonically disruptive performance. The solo set by Brattleboro's Dredd Foole was also excellent. Beginning with a surprise rendition of "Sugar Mountain", it evolved into a lovely sampling from his recent work – devoid of electronics and vocal manipulations, but filled with glowing orbs of pure spirit.

The next day's shows began at Mystery Train Records in Amherst, then moved to Hampshire's Tavern. Several visiting combos made deep impressions while trapped between the store's two large (and stylistically symbolic) murals – one by rustic primitive Michael Hurley, the other by Belgian art-noise maniac Dennis Tyfus. Especially neat was a contingent from Maine including Visitations



(one of the quietest bedroom combos on the planet) and Id M Theft Able (a one man deep breath gargle unit, who looked a bit like a human/bear hybrid). Both of them fulfilled the potential of their excellent recordings, in terms both intimate and confused. Another revelation was Philadelphia's Aswara, an acoustic group whose line-up seems pretty similar to that of Death Chants, and whose music is a deep slide into bowed webs of raga goo.

The evening show at the Tavern opened with a great set by Emeralds, who are friends of Lambsbread from Ohio. This trio produced a smoke-fed electronic dronescape so rich it achieved choral qualities at times. Gown and Sunburned Hand Of The Man (just wrapping up a shared tour) swapped members and concepts – and both ended up producing amazingly loud and abstract sets filled with crazed guitar, the explosive basswork of Adam Nodelman (ex-Borbetomagus) and variations on the sounds of insect paranoia. Heathen Shame managed to top even this. Wayne and Kate (of Major Stars) squeezed endless gloops of feedback out of their amps while Greg Kelley blew furious distorto trumpet lines into hell's blazing portals. It was one heck of a bravura performance.

Sunday dawned early, at Hampshire's Red Barn. There was a great reading by Sara Jaffe

(ex-Erase Errata), which posited some new theories about the music of Rhys Chatham among other things. There was also a sample of some unscheduled rock action from Bent Moustache (the Dog Faced Hermans offshoot, who played with J Mascis subbing on guitar). Mascis also performed with Vashti Bashers (a drum trio he shares with Rick Myers and Anna Klein). Of the three days, this was the most rock-oriented, although what exactly connects the power-skronk of DC's Kahoutek with the out there beard-o ruralism of New York's Coachfingers and the strange folk root work of Nashville's Cherry Blossoms is not easy to divine.

One can only infer the connection between these wildly varied combos is synaptic. They all drink from the same river – one that winds through the landscape in a way that bends away from any dream of commercial success; an act freeing participants to exist and revel in the process of creation itself. This may be hermetic (the bulk of the festival's audience was made up of performers), but it's also a realistic way to avoid the traps of Mammon. All the music at Gladtree, as loud or soft, as rock or non-rock as it might be, was created for sheer pleasure. And what else do you really need or want?

BYRON COLEY

Conlon Nancarrow Tribute: Thomas Adès + Arditti Quartet + Katia & Marielle Labèque

LSO ST LUKE'S JERWOOD HALL
LONDON, UK

Programmed as part of Traced Overhead, a season London's Barbican has dedicated to the work of British composer and pianist Thomas Adès, this late evening concert paid tribute to the pianola music and compositions of the late Conlon Nancarrow. Nancarrow (like John Cage and Harry Partch) was deeply involved in taking apart a traditional musical form and reassembling

it, and his technique of hand punching paper pianola rolls created an unique sound that stands as a very early example of programmed music.

After Nancarrow's original piano rolls were carefully slotted inside the belly of the 1927 Bösendorfer grand player piano, the instrument rendered the strata of sound that formed his incredible musical vision, thundering magnificently through the refurbished rafters of LSO St Lukes.

Beginning with six of his Studies For Player Piano series, the keyboard of the spotlit Bösendorfer rippled spectrally through a

selection of Nancarrow's finest pieces. These included No 3A – also known as Boogie-Woogie Suite – a piece that swiftly shifted from being a Jelly Roll Morton styled work into a more complex, multilayered composition where the original theme was buried under an avalanche of dislocated rhythm and tumbling keyboard crescendo.

Other areas of Nancarrow's work were illuminated by The Arditti Quartet's sensitive rendition of his minimalist String Quartet No 3 (where the fury and joy of the player piano pieces were stripped down to raw nerve ends), the Adès arranged

version of his Studies For Player Piano Nos 6 and 7 (complete with a suitably abstract video installation by Tal Rosner and Sophie Clements), and Katia and Marielle Labèque's elegantly fingered 3 Canons For Ursula.

It was the Bösendorfer, however, that stole the show, and as it hammered out Studies For Player Piano Nos 36 and 42 you could distinctly feel the power, the passion and the presence of the composer – almost as though he had been sitting in the concert hall.

EDWIN POUNCEY

Présences Électronique

MAISON DE RADIO FRANCE
PARIS, FRANCE

Thanks to adventurous programming ranging between electroacoustic classics and cutting edge electronica, the GRM's annual Présences Électronique Festival is becoming one of the highlights of the French avant music scene. For the participating artists, it's an opportunity to avail themselves of studio time at the GRM and diffuse their pieces on its top-flight multi-loudspeaker orchestra, the Acousmonium. For the GRM, meanwhile, it's a means of familiarising new audiences with the output of the electroacoustic music studio founded by Pierre Schaeffer in 1958 – and of keeping abreast of the work of the new generation of electronica artists who are building on his legacy. For this third edition, however, Présences Électronique cast its net even wider by adding folk and pop inflected acts to the line-up, with the aim of taking stock of the impact of technology on different genres.

Each of the four nights opened with an electroacoustic classic before moving on to other musical genres. On the first night the opener was Edgard Varèse's Poème Électronique, which premiered at the 1958 World's Fair as part of the sound, light and image show designed by Le Corbusier for the Philips Pavilion. Incorporating sounds of bells, sirens, instruments and voices, many of them electronically processed, its raw intensity communicated a sense of discovery and excitement at the vast potential of electronic sound and stood in stark contrast to the more polished, streamlined flow of the sets that



Matmos at Présences Électronique

followed. French musician and composer Jérôme Soudan, aka Mimetic, delivered a predictable performance beginning with soft shimmering sonorities and gradually mutating into loud bursts of staccato machine gun fire. Matmos's offering was equally lacking in intensity. Suave and tongue-in-cheek, it set jaunty melodies to clunky toe tapping beats. Their follow-up performance – the final section of Robert Ashley's opera Perfect Lives – made up for it, however. Drew Daniel's intricate laptop accompaniment perfectly complemented Martin C Schmidt's live guitar and hypnotic deadpan delivery of Ashley's text.

Opening the second night, Denis Dufour's 1981 composition, Suite En Trois Mouvements,

was a striking experience, with its sputtering high-tension fizzes and a series of wispy, high-pitched sounds that spelt out an evanescent melody. For the spellbinding climax, slow moving, squelching blobs of sound rubbed up against one other with such intensity and presence that you wanted to reach out and touch them. With its exquisitely crafted elements and carefully structured development, it was a far cry from eRikm's opened ended, largely improvised set later that same evening – which proved equally memorable. Referencing musique concrète sounds from the 1960s, but also Pierre Schaeffer and Pierre Henry's proto-DJ experiments with turntables in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the French DJ and sound artist hopped, skipped and danced behind his turntables, dexterously whipping up a frenzied, explosive mix of crackles, thuds, hisses and voice snippets in a tense, compelling performance. Rounding off the evening, the last two sets by electronica heavyweights alva nota and Mouse On Mars just weren't in the same league: alva nota's "Xerrox", with its mournful, enveloping drawn-out washes of sound, appeared uneventful and overlong after eRikm's sharp, concise playing, while Mouse On Mars served up a repetitive barrage of stolid, heavy handed beats that would have gone down far better at a club night.

Scanner's set the following night was more in line with the GRM's exploratory approach to sound. A thoughtful, moving dreamscape, it was built up from such disparate materials as the voice of Roland Barthes, a ghostly choir, the sounds of footsteps in the snow and of

elephants making love, as well as remote, indistinct voices culled from television programmes. French singer Emilie Simon's set likewise stood out, not for her poppy music and saccharine vocals, but for the sheer quality and sharpness of the electronic sounds punctuating her performance.

The last night's concerts spotlighted the potential of lo-fi technology. Toshimaru Nakamura's no-input mixing board produced a suspenseful, minimal mix of beeps, splatters and hisses. Musique concrète composers Jérôme Noetinger and Lionel Marchetti's "Echange Cannibale" for two Revox tape recorders was no less gripping, with each composer mixing and recording a variety of materials, ranging from bursts of harmonica to blowing sounds. Soon an explosive cocktail of hums, squawks and whistles was flying around the venue only to climax in a strange, off-kilter collage of murky dreamlike sounds. It was left to Blixa Bargeld to close the proceedings – with two foot pedals and a looping machine. By looping words, syllables and vocalisations, he created beats and backing tracks and proceeded to sing over them. In his exploration of the border areas between words and music, he produced intricate sonic textures that resounded throughout the space. Interspersing his songs with anecdotes on topics ranging from genetic manipulation to motorway driving, he demonstrated an impeccable sense of showmanship, closing the festival to loud applause. The GRM had never seen anything quite like it.

RAHMA KHAZAM

Hipersônica

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
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This fourth instalment of the Hipersônica festival is a musical subdivision of the much larger FILE (International Festival Of Electronic Language), and inhabits the underbelly space of Museu de Arte Moderna, a late 1940s edifice that's supported by huge concrete struts. This is an acoustically perfect setting for high volume wrenching sounds, with its low ceiling and muscly speaker system spanning the four corners of the space. The artists traverse the spectrum of abstract electronica, edging towards the less regimented zones of beat orientated music. The stated aim is to combine a core musical programme with elements of performance art and installation.

The Austrian composer Wolfgang Dorninger opens the evening with his electronic opera Nasca On Perspective, aided by the desolate grey visuals of Fuckhead founder Didi Bruckmayr and the profoundly battering percussion of Max Wolfsteiner ricocheting underneath the arches with immense force. The impossibly punky tenor Siegmar Aigner is the dominant presence, his guttural sustains coughed up from the sawdust covered boards of a low-rent opera house.

A complete contrast are Brazil's own Esquadrão Atari, hailing from Belo Horizonte and packing three riff-hungry guitars. They descend from the internationally known Cansei De Ser Sexy and Bonde Do Role, clashing 1980s electro with 1970s punk. Their computer might be Apple rather than Atari, but

nevertheless the beats are basic and the samples are simply straight, unadorned lifts from the history of popular song.

The festival's first revelation arrives in the shape of Laborg, another collective uniting visual and aural in spectacular fashion. Their governing concept is to set up a laboratory stage left, pottering about with glass bowls, tubes and tanks filled with a variety of oily fluids, which are mixed, squirted, bubbled by blow darts, boiled, shaken and stirred, filmed all the while from all angles, with real-time images ranged around multiple screens. Illuminated by a sickly amber glow, they look like bearded disciples, rapt with beaded concentration as they dissect the body of Christ. The music is suitably panoramic, minimally spread into slowly shifting blocks of sheer rumble, flecked by cascading crinkles. They are followed by RAY_XXXX, a pair of Canadians who sit with their backs to the audience, delivering a set of obsessively pounding systems music under huge flashing geometric shapes on the video screens. Their attack is physical, building up a visceral dense noise. The duo, Alain Thibault and Matthew Biederman, provide the night's last real outbreak of sonic extremity, as they're followed by a run of laptopers who concern themselves with off-kilter rhythms for the club environment.

Acting as a bridge, Scanner opens with some trademark interference, pylons spreading fuzzes of grey noise. But Robin Rimbaud is in a partying mood and it's not long before his Techno set manifests itself. As he gradually sets the beats loose, Scanner is headbanging



Laborg at Hipersônica

furiously, offering his own dislocated version of the Techno process. He ends up sounding curiously retro, accessible yet hard. He sings into his microphone like a fallen choirboy, sampling on the hoof, mixing voice with expansive piano chords, rising on an exhilarating upward curve. Kode9 is bringing dubstep to Brazil for the first time, and this might just present problems on the dancefloor. Finding the right beat to emphasise with their footwork appears to be problematic for much of the crowd, and indeed, even for the familiar listener, it's clear that Kode9 delights in the tensions between Spaceape's vocal lines and his own basslines. He's almost playing one endless number, continually cutting back into spaciousness. The sense of threat is constant, permanently seconds away from the rhythmic pay-off.

The showmanlike climax comes courtesy of Daedelus, draped in his white circus ringleader coat, bushy sideburns signalling willful eccentricity. His live set concentrates on the hyperventilating dance push, with laptop channelled through his homemade sample trigger, a box covered with twinkling light lozenges, like something out of a 1950s science fiction film. This allows complete spontaneity when triggering sounds, gushing out a jumbled collision of commercialised slices, compressed into a creamed up rush of all the best bits. The Hipersônica festival was a well-crafted journey from moody abstraction to joyful pumping, with a variety of permutations encountered on the way.

MARTIN LONGLEY



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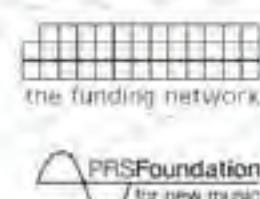
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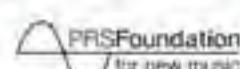
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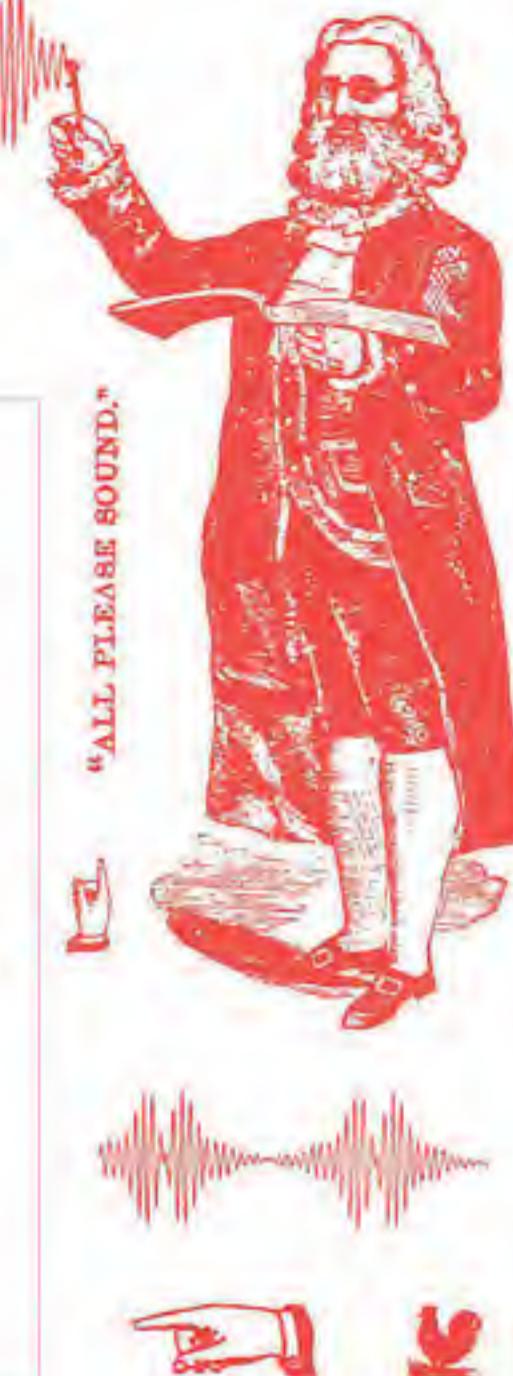
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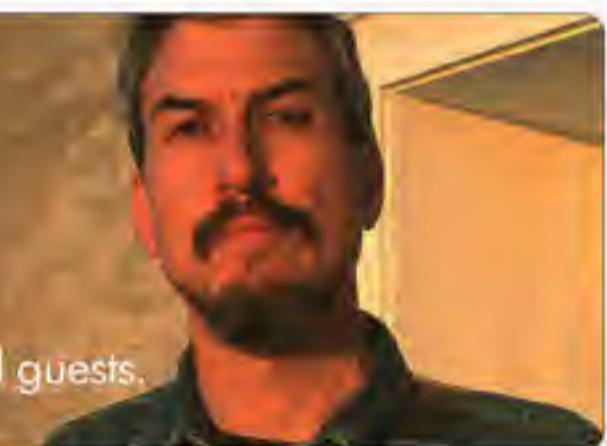
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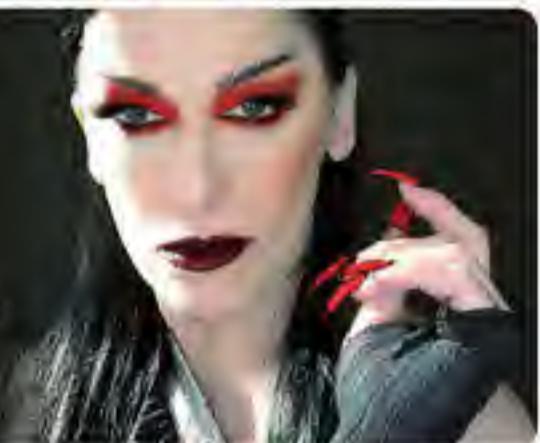


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3rd
against cultural exile
Brave Festival
“Drowned Songs”
7-14 July 2007, Wroclaw

Teatr Piesn Kozla / Song Of The Goat Theatre

This year's edition of the Brave Festival gives you a unique opportunity to hear drowned songs, forgotten voices and lost sounds.

The programme includes traditional polyphonic singing from Macedonia (Bistri Vodi), Sardinia (Actores Alidos) and Russia (Narodnyj Praznik), as well as voices and instruments from Azerbaijan (Ali Quasimov), Yakutia (Chyskyrrai) and Siberia (Irkuck Ensemble Authentic Music); we will hear ancient Christian songs (Igor Reznikoff) and lamentation of the Berber wailing women (Raudaniat).

Among the theatre performances we will see a spectacle inspired by the epic stories of the nomadic tribes from Kirgizstan (Sakhna), 'eskesta' dance presented by the Ethiopian Jews (Beta Dance Troupe) and traditional tribal dances by Australian Aborigines (Descendance).

Films presented during this edition of the festival make up exploratory images of diffusing cultures and small, forgotten societies. We will observe and follow the main characters in their search of the cultural heritage, affiliation, often in places biased by the history or determined by nature. We will show productions from countries like Australia, Chile, Finland, Holland, Israel, Cambodia, Russia, and Ukraine.

Festival will be accompanied by photo-exhibitions, evening concerts, discussion panels and workshops with the artists.

These are only few upcoming events of this year's edition of the Brave Festival. You can find a detailed programme of the Festival on www.bravefestival.pl

Total income from the Festival shall be donated to charity Rokpa International and its projects in Tibet – www.rokpa.org



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Out There

This month's selected festivals, live events, clubs and broadcasts.

Send info to The Wire, 23 Jack's Place, 6 Corbet Place, London E1 6NN, UK.

Fax +44 (0)20 7422 5011, listings@thewire.co.uk. Compiled by Lisa Blanning

UK Festivals

All Tomorrow's Parties – Weekend Two

MINEHEAD
Billed as "ATP Vs The Fans", with half of the line-up chosen by ATP and the other half voted for by ticket buyers. Acts include Patti Smith, Ghost, The Books, Yo La Tengo, Shellac, Wilco, Slint, Echo & The Bunnymen, Current 93, Do Make Say Think and more. Minehead Butlins, 18–20 May, £140/£120, www.atpfestival.com

Beardstock

GLASGOW
An all-dayer presented by Beardzine with DJs, talks, projections and original artwork as well as performances by The One Ensemble, Shining, Team Brick and more. Glasgow Regal Social Club, 19 May, midday, £12, www.myspace.com/beardstockfest

Deaf Forever!

LEEDS
A day of extreme music with noise from Justice Yeldham And The Dynamic Ribbon Device, Mattin & Matthew Bower, Sudden Infant & Bill Kouligas, Filthy Turd, Mutant Ape, Cheapmachines, Kylie Minoise, Midwich, Smear Campaign and many more. Leeds Royal Park Cellars, 28 May, £10/£7, www.celebrateleeds07.com/termiteclub

Freedom Of The City

LONDON
A festival of radical and improvised music curated by Evan Parker, Eddie Prévost and Martin Davidson with performances by Prévost/Joe Williamson/Alan Wilkinson, Unit, Matt Milton Group, Glasgow Improvisers Orchestra, London Improvisers Orchestra, Alex Ward/Alexander Hawkins/Dominic Lash/Paul May, Parker/Agusti Fernández/John Russell/John Edwards and many more. London Red Rose, 6–7 May, www.emanemdisc.com

Futuresonic

MANCHESTER
11th annual festival of electronic music and arts with live performances, an exhibition of artworks in a shopping centre, a technologies summit and more. Live acts include Faust, TTC, Clark, Wolfgang Flür, Apparat and many more. Manchester various venues, 10–12 May, www.futuresonic.com

Le Weekend

STIRLING
Tenth year for this Scottish festival promoting "effective difference" with The One Ensemble Orchestra, Nils Økland & Håkon Stene, Bill Wells, Barbara Morgenstern/Stefan Schneider/Annie Whitehead, Kaffe Matthews/Jarlath Henderson/Chris Gibb, Richard Youngs, Zeena Parkins & Ikue Mori and more plus film screenings. Stirling Tolbooth 25–27 May, 01786 274000, www.leweekendfestival.com

Long Weekend

LONDON
Four days of installations, films and discussions with performances by Throbbing Gristle,

Joshua Rifkin, Gavin Bryars, Michael Nyman, Ikue Mori, Charlie Dark, Xentos Fray Bentos, Ryoichi Kurokawa, Toshimaru Nakamura and Billy Roisz, and Sachiko M with Ben Drew. London Tate Modern, 25–28 May, various times and prices, www.tate.org.uk/modern

Lovebytes

SHEFFIELD

Digital arts festival with an international programme of events representing forward-thinking music, art and design including live performances from Yasunao Tone, Russell Haswell & Hecker, Alexander Rishaug, Pixel, Aoki Takamasa, Plaid, Digital Mystikz, Battles, Clark and more as well as a site-specific sound composition by Biosphere. Sheffield various venues, 13–20 May, www.lovebytes.org.uk

Music Lovers' Field Companion

GATESHEAD

A trusty festival guide to genre defining artists of experimental music supported by The Wire. Performers include Diamanda Galás, Sanjah, William Parker, Polwechsel, Junko & Masayoshi Urabe, Aufgehoben, Hisato Higuchi, Peter Evans, Ascension, Angharad Davies/Tisha Mukarji/Andrea Neumann, Gary Smith, Ikuro Takahashi and many more. Gateshead Sage, 11–13 May, £16/day pass, www.arika.org.uk

Venn

BRISTOL

Fourth year for this diverse festival organised by volunteers. Featuring Faust with Colin Potter, A Hawk And A Hacksaw, Spring Heel Jack with J Spaceman & Mark Sanders, Vladislav Delay, Jack Rose, Yellow Swans, Maher Shalal Hash Baz, Islaja, KTL, Aufgehoben, Safety Scissors and more. Bristol various venues, 31 May–3 June, various times and prices, www.vennfestival.com

Women's Arts International

KENDAL

Three weeks of performances, films, exhibitions and readings in the Lake District including Marianne Faithfull, Patti Smith, Peggy Seeger, Susanna & The Magical Orchestra, Hanne Hukkelberg, Marissa Nadler and more. Kendal various venues, 4–24 May, various times and prices, www.womensartsinternational.co.uk

International Festivals

Courtisane

BELGIUM

Festival of short film, video and New Media also featuring live performance from Ghost, Stefan Lakatos and Christian Marclay's Screenplay (featuring Steve Beresford and John Butcher among others). Ghent Arts Centre Vooruit, 3–6 May, www.courtisane.be

Dissonanze

ITALY

Electronic music and digital arts in Rome with pre-festival concerts by Stockhausen (7 May),

The Books (16) and Die Schachtel (26) and the main weekend with alva noto, Fennesz & Mike Patton, FM3, KTL, Apparat, Pole, Modified Toy Orchestra, Various Production and many more. Rome various venues, 1–2 June, www.dissonanze.it

Elektra

CANADA

Eighth edition of this digital arts festival featuring music, video, dance, interactive systems, installations, game art and immersive performances with Ryoji Ikeda's Datamatics project, Scanner & Tez, Louis Dufort, Bent Object, Ulf Langheinrich and many more. Montréal various venues, 9–13 May, www.elektrafestival.ca

Into The City

AUSTRIA

Underground section of the Vienna Festival with a strong dubstep presence, featuring Kode9 & Spaceape, Benga, Low, Scanner, Negativland and many more, as well as films and exhibitions including Kim Gordon & Jutta Koether's Reverse Karaoke installation. Vienna various venues, 11 May–19 June, various times and prices, www.festwochen.at

Mission Creek Music And Arts

USA

11th annual Bay Area community festival taking place in a dozen venues with literary and art events, performances and a Balkan Brass Parade. Artists include Acid Mothers Temple, Comets On Fire, Daedelus, Vincent Gallo's RRIICCEE and many more. San Francisco various venues, 10–20 May, various times and prices, www.mcmf.org

Moers

GERMANY

Annual outdoor festival in western Germany, this year supported by The Wire. Featured artists include Keiji Haino & Merzbow, Cornelius, Steven Bernstein's Millennial Territory Orchestra, FM3, Fennesz & Mike Patton, Hiromi, Zu & The Thing and many more. Moers Schlosspark, 25–28 May, €78/€68 pass, www.festivalmoerskultur-gmbh.de

MusikTriennale Köln

GERMANY

Adventurous strains of sound art, Improv and noise with Crawl Unit + Jacob Kirkegaard (28 April), Tetsuo Furudate, Chessmachine and KK Null (4 May), Burning Star Core (11), Noël Akchoté & Tetuzi Akiyama + Aube (18) and many more. Cologne Kulturbunker, 28 April–18 May, various times and prices, www.kulturbunker-muelheim.de

Musique Action

FRANCE

24th festival of contemporary music with live performances from Fred Frith & Chris Cutler, Sébastien Roux, Delay Versus Trio, Lionel Marchetti and many more. Vandœuvre-Lès-Nancy various venues, 14–20 May, www.centremalraux.com

Musique Actuelle

CANADA

Another edition of the annual festival of far out music. Anthony Braxton, John Zorn, Acid Mothers Gong, The Melvins, Carla Bozulich, Magik Markers, Keiji Haino & Merzbow, Kevin Blechdom & Eugene Chadbourne and many more. Victoriaville various venues, 17–21 May, www.fimav.qc.ca

Mutek

CANADA

Annual electronic music and digital arts celebration with Rhythm & Sound, Kode9 & Spaceape, The Mole, Digitaline, Pheek, Candie Hank and many more. Montréal various venues, 30 May–3 June, www.mutek.org

No Fun Fest

USA

Now annual noise-a-thon, this year featuring performances by Yoshimi/Kim Gordon, Keiji Haino, Hive Mind, Hair Police, Thurston Moore, Burning Star Core, Merzbow, Sissy Spacek and many more. Brooklyn Hook, 17–20 May, \$65 festival pass, www.nofunfest.com

Noise!

USA

Sound performance festival started in 2005, this year curated by free103point9 with nightly 'Radio 4x4' transmission performances. Includes Talibam!, Giancarlo Bracchi, The Peeesseye, The Holy Experiment, Subhitters, George Steeltoe Ensemble and more. New York Ontological Theater, 10–12 May, \$7/night, www.ontological.com

Ring Ring

SERBIA

12th edition of this southern European festival of 'innovative music' with appearances by Pere Ubu, Saadet Turkoz & Nils Wogram, Belgradeyard Soundsystem, Luci Capese & Toshimaru Nakamura, Livio Minfra and more. Belgrade various venues, 13–17 May, www.ringringpromotions.org

Risonanze

ITALY

Contemporary music festival consisting of a series of concerts including Alberto Braida/John Butcher/John Edwards/Fabrizio Spera (10 May), Elliott Sharp (17), Herb Robertson/Evan Parker/Agusti Fernández (21), The Dirty Three (26) and Philip Samartzis/Eric La Casa/Jean-Luc Guionnet (31). Venice Teatro Fondamenta Nuove, 10–31 May, 9pm, various prices, www.teatروفondamentanuove.it

Skanu Mezs

LATVIA

A 'sound forest' of experimental music and film now in its fifth edition. Opening night features Boredoms followed by a weekend of performances with Trio A, Prurient, No-Neck Blues Band, Zeena Parkins & Ikue Mori, The Books, Mouse On Mars, Venetian Snares, Islaja and more. Film programme includes works by Hans Richter, Fernand Léger, Marcel Duchamp, Walter Ruttmann, Harry Smith and

more. Riga various venues, 4 & 11–12 May, www.skanumezs.lv

Uncool

SWITZERLAND

Outdoor festival in its fifth edition, this time featuring the music of Tuva. Artists include Sainkho Namchylak, Henry Grimes, Marshall Allen, Andrew Lamb, Moscow Composers Orchestra, Peter Hollinger and many more. Poschiavo Valposchiavo, 17–20 May, www.uncool.ch

Unsound On Tour Across Borders

UKRAINE/BELARUS

A travelling version of the Unsound Festival showcasing Central European artists and involving concerts, club nights, workshops and video screenings. Artists include Pole, Thomas Fehlmann, Kapital Band 1, Institut Fuer Feinmotorik, Aabzu and many more. Kiev & Minsk various venues, 10–13 May, www.unsound.pl

Special Events

Georg Gatsas's The Process VI

USA

One half of a double exhibition (with Jacob Kirkegaard's sound installation Broadway) of photographs including work by Genesis P-Orridge, Ira Cohen, Brian DeGraw and others, which will culminate in a series of concerts featuring Ira Cohen, Tony Conrad and Madasiddhi (2 May), Dälek, Norbert Möslang and Thomas Korber (3) and IUD + The Young Gods (4). New York Swiss Institute, exhibition runs to 1 May, www.swissinstitute.net

Harry Smith Anthology Remixed

UK

An exhibition supported by The Wire featuring 84 artists and musicians who were invited to make a visual artwork in response to individual tracks of Harry Smith's Anthology Of American Folk Music. Contributors include Linder, Yamataka Eye, John Olson, Michael Nyman, Jad Fair, Bill Drummond, Vashti Bunyan and many more. Newcastle alt.gallery, 8 May–30 June, www.altgallery.org

If Everybody Had An Ocean

UK

31 artists including John Cage, Raymond Pettibon and Bridget Riley offer perspectives on the importance of The Beach Boys' driving force Brian Wilson's work in paintings, sculptures, installations, photo-text and films. St Ives Tate, 26 May–23 September, www.tate.org.uk

National Noise Day

UK

A not strictly 'national' celebration curated by Henry 'Shitmat' Collins with a daytime exhibition of interactive sound art, open afternoon noise-busking in the Lanes and an evening event with performances by Extreme Noise Terror, DJ Scotch Egg, Dylan Nyoukis, Shitmat, Team Brick and many more. Brighton various venues, 31 May, £8/£7 club event, www.national-noise-day.co.uk

Performance Of Sound

UK

Artists, performers and historians illustrate how sound is captured and transformed into new practices. Guests include David Toop, Claudia Wegener, John Wynne and Tim Wainwright, Peter Cusack, Jem Finer, Zoe Irvine and Hayley Newman. London Tate Britain Auditorium, 19 May, 10am, £25/£18, www.crisap.org

Radioworks

UK

A series of interactive sound pieces exploring naturally occurring space radio phenomena. Includes sonic models of the cosmic microwave background, a work comprised of the Earth's own natural electroacoustic phenomena and The Heliosonic Resonator, whose sound is generated by seismic disturbances of the sun. London Shunt Vaults, 2–18 May, Wednesdays–Fridays, 6pm, free, www.interactive-agents.com

SonicRecycler3

UK

Third annual event showcasing different strands of experimental music based on the idea of recycling with live music by Stephan Mathieu, Boduf Songs, Rothko and David Cunningham as well as DJs, films, presentations and stalls by local recycling organisations. Brentford Watermans Art Centre, 5 May, 4pm, £10/£8, www.myspace.com/sonicrecycler

Stockhausen's Cosmic Pulses

ITALY

World premiere and subsequent presentation for an eight-track piece by the composer using a new technique for the spatialisation of sound layers. Rome Auditorium Parco della Musica (7 May), Macerata Teatro Lauro Rossi (9). www.stockhausen.org

Then The Silence Increased

UK

An exhibition of artists' statements on silence with performances from Claus van Bebber

& Michael Vorfeld, Benedict Drew &

Emma Hart and Christopher Gladwin. Salford Chapman Gallery, 14 May–1 June (performance 19 May, 7pm), www.thenthesilenceincreased.blogspot.com

Vacant Space

UK

Janek Schaefer's multimedia installation of location recordings collected by Chris Watson and architectural images which respond to the movement of gallery-goers. Birmingham Midlands Arts Centre, to 27 May, free, www.sonicartsnetwork.org/vacantspace

On Stage

65 Days Of Static

Monotreme-signed epic rocktronic group on the road again. Sheffield Plug (7 May), Leeds Cockpit (8), Preston 53 Degrees (9), Manchester Academy 3 (10), Newcastle Academy 2 (11), Nottingham Rock City (13), Birmingham Academy 2 (14), Cardiff Point (15), Portsmouth Wedgewood Rooms (16), Exeter Phoenix (17), Reading Fez Club (18), London Koko (20). www.65daysofstatic.com

Band Of Holy Joy

A Resonance FM benefit with BOHJ's first appearance in four years with support from Andy Astle, Comfy Moss, Society Of Imaginary Friends, The Bert Shaft Orchestra and Simon Rivers. London 12 Bar, 1 May, 8pm, £10, 020 7240 2622

Battles

Warp-signed hardcore fusionists return. London Scala (16 May), Sheffield Corporation (17), Bristol Cooler (18), Minehead All Tomorrow's Parties (19), Leeds Stylus Uni (20), Manchester Academy 2 (22), Glasgow ABC2 (23), Birmingham Barfly (24), Dublin Temple Bar Music Centre (25). www.bttls.com

Colleen + Triosk

A Leaf Label tour featuring the warm instrumentals of Colleen and improvisatory blendings by Triosk. Liverpool Picture House (29 April), Norwich Arts Centre (30), Colchester Arts Centre (1 May), London Luminaire (2), Leeds Holy Trinity Church (4), Bristol Cube Cinema (5), www.theleaflabel.com

Julian Cope

The head druid on a solo tour. Barrow-in Furness Canteen (6 May), Aberdeen Lemon Tree (8), Reading Concert Hall (11), Norwich Arts Centre (12), Exeter Phoenix (14), Portsmouth Wedgewood Rooms (15), Birmingham Glee Club (16), Gloucester Arts

Centre (17), Northampton Roadmender (19), Stoke-on-Trent Sugarmill (20).

www.headheritage.co.uk

Arrington De Dionyo + Ignatz

Old Time Relijun's De Dionyo brings his solo show back to the UK with support from (K-RAA-K)'s blues deconstructionist Ignatz. Colchester Arts Centre (22 May), Manchester Klondyke Club (23), Newcastle Cumberland Arms (24), London Corsica Studios (25), Milton Keynes tbc (26), Coventry Taylor John's House (27), Cardiff Buffalo Bar (29), Leeds Upstairs at the Library (30), Cheltenham Slak Bar (31), Liverpool St Brides Church (1 June), Bristol Venn Festival (2). www.myspace.com/arringtondedionyo

Drowned In A Dull Roar

Satellite event to Futuresonic (see UK Festivals) with Ray Lee's Siren and live performances from Colin Potter, Lee Patterson and more in a disused public bathhouse. Manchester Victoria Baths, 12 May, www.adulroar.co.uk

Eats Tapes

Circuit-bending Techno experimentation from this Tigerbeat6-signed duo. Nottingham Moog (3 May), Leeds tba (4), London Buffalo Bar (with Lucky Dragons, 6). www.myspace.com/eatstapes

Electrelane

The Brighton group now scattered across the globe return home for a few shows. Manchester Academy (7 May), Nottingham Social (8), London Scala (9). www.electrelane.com

Erase Errata

The newly energised post-punk trio return. London Luminaire (15 May), Manchester Roadhouse (16), Nottingham Maze (17). www.eraseerrata.com

Free Noise

A CMN tour supported by The Wire with a stellar line-up of British free jazz and American noise musicians including Evan Parker, Yellow Swans, John Wiese, Metalux, John Edwards and Culver. Edinburgh Bongo Club (28 April), Glasgow CCA (29), Cardiff The Point (30), Sage Gateshead (1 May), Leeds Wardrobe (2), Bristol Arnolfini (3), London ULU (5). www.no-fi.org.uk, www.cmntours.org.uk

Fulborn Teversham

Wry young British Improv. Cheltenham Pillar Room (5 May), Brighton Komedia (with Leafcutter John, 15). www.myspace.com/fulbornteversham

aufabwegen activities spring 2007:

Klangtransfer festival

28th april - 9th may: sound installations by joe colley + yunchul kim

4th may: concerts by chessmachine, kk null, daniel menche, tetsuo furudate

9th may: concerts by marc behrens + pe lang/zimoun

11th may: concerts by burning star core, various artists play fm3's buddha machine, featuring erhard hirt, michael prime, minit

18th may: concerts by aube, tetuzi akiyama+noel akchote, nakamura + capece, polmo polpo + mantler

24th may: concert by keiji haino + merzbow = kikuri, aube

/// all at kulturbunker muelheim cologne, germany www.kulturbunker-muelheim.de/klangtransfer

11th may - 31st may 07: AUBE europe tour check www.aufabwegen.com/aube for dates

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Diamanda Galás

Extra UK date around her Music Lover's Field Companion appearance. London Barbican, 7 May, 8pm, £20–£10, www.barbican.org.uk

Ghost

Masaki Batoh's free-range psychedelic collective return for rare UK shows. Glasgow Mono (17 May), Minehead All Tomorrow's Parties (19), Manchester Islington Mill (20), London 93 Feet East (with Aum Sahib and Team Brick, 21). www.dragcity.com/bands/ghost.html

Jonathan Harvey & Kaffe Matthews

Part of Radio 3's Hear & Now programme of live events featuring "intoxicating noise" by The BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra performing works by Harvey, with Matthews on live electronics. Glasgow City Halls, 5 May, 7:30pm, www.bbc.co.uk/bbcso

Mick Harvey

The Bad Seed celebrates the release of his new solo album Two Of Diamonds with a London show. London Bush Hall, 27 May, 7:30pm, £15, www.mickharvey.com

A Hawk And A Hacksaw

The Eastern European-influenced duo in a CMN tour sponsored by The Wire in tandem with The Hun Hangár Ensemble from Budapest. Oxford Zodiac (5 May), Norwich Arts Centre (6), Leeds Holy Trinity Church (with Jack Rose, 7), Glasgow The Arches (with Jack Rose, 8), Newcastle University of Northumbria (with Jack Rose, 9), Cardiff The Point (10), London Bush Hall (with Jack Rose, 11), Brighton Dome (with King Naat Veliov and The Original Koçanı Orkestar, 12). www.qujunktions.com

Charles Hayward

Solo show from the former This Heat drummer with support from Medicine & Duty. Brighton Hope, 8pm, £5, www.myspace.com/charleshayward

Hanne Hukkelberg

The Norwegian singer tours with a six-piece group. Norwich Arts Centre (21 May), Kendal Women's Arts International Festival (22), London Luminaire (23), Bath Festival (26). www.hanne.hukkelberg.net

Kampec Dolores

Folk-influenced avant rock from Hungary. Portsmouth Fawcett (17 May), Norwich Cidershed (18), Sheffield tbc (19), Dumfries Knockengorrock Festival (20). www.kampecdolores.hu

Kid Koala

The Canadian turntablist and illustrator performs with four turntables. London Koko (3 May), Bristol Fiddlers (4), Dublin Temple Bar Music Centre (5), Glasgow Arches (6). www.kidkoala.com

KT

The duo of Stephen O'Malley and Peter Rehberg performs live. Glasgow Tramway (24–26 May), Glasgow Nice 'N' Sleazy (27), Birmingham Barfly (28), London Luminaire (29), Manchester tbc (30), Bristol Venn Festival (31). www.myspace.com/ktlrule

Ligeti Remembered 2

Second series by London Sinfonietta in honour of György Ligeti, also including works by Steve Reich. London Queen Elizabeth Hall, 19 May, 7:30pm, £22/£8, www.southbankcentre.co.uk

Low

Short UK jaunt for the moody trio. Nottingham Rescue Rooms (25 April), Glasgow Oran Mor (26), Manchester Academy 3 (27), Minehead

All Tomorrow's Parties (28), London Shepherd's Bush Empire (8 May), Dublin Village (9). www.chairkickers.com

Maher Shalal Hash Baz

The Japanese collective make a London stop with support from Shiu-Yeung Hui, Naoto Kawate and Koji Shibuya. London Red Rose, 30 May, 8pm, £8, www.myspace.com/decablisty

Hugh Masekela

UK tour for the South African trumpeter and his group. Manchester RNCM (11 May), Cambridge Corn Exchange (12), Oxford Playhouse (13), Crawley Hawth (15), Bradford St Georges Theatre (17), London Barbican (19). www.serious.org.uk

Melvins

The original sludge-rockers return. Birmingham Barfly (1 May), London Islington Academy (2). www.melvins.com

Marissa Nadler

Ethereal Gothic folk stylings. London Bush Hall (1 May), Cardiff Point (2), Cornwall tbc (4), Coventry Tin Angel (5), Glasgow Regal (7), Chester Women's Festival (8), Manchester Phoenix Club (9). www.marissanadler.com

Terry Riley

Debut Irish appearances with performances of his most famous works as well as new ones. Drogheda St Peter's Church Of Ireland (4–6 May), www.terryriley.com

Jack Rose

Lush fingerpicking and lap steel from the former Pelt guitarist. Colchester Arts Centre (5 May), Milton Keynes tba (6), Leeds Holy Trinity Church (with A Hawk And A Hacksaw, 7), Glasgow Arches (with AHAHAH, 8), Newcastle University of Northumbria (with AHAHAH, 9), Coventry Taylor John's House (10), London Bush Hall (with AHAHAH, 11), Cambridge Portland Arms (12), Brighton Albert (13), Cardiff Buffalo Bar (15), Falmouth Leaf Tea House (16), Cork Triskel Arts Centre (29), Limerick Baker Place (30), Belfast Pavilion Bar (31), Dublin Boom Boom Room (1 June), Bristol Venn Festival (2), London Luminaire (3). www.myspace.com/jackrosekensington

The Royal Ballet

A triple bill of 20th century scores: The Seven Deadly Sins by Kurt Weill, Pierrot Lunaire by Arnold Schoenberg and La Fin Du Jour by Maurice Ravel. London Royal Opera House, 4–9 May, £50–£4, various times, www.roh.org.uk

Geoff Smith: Häxan: Witchcraft

Through The Ages

Benjamin Christensen's 1922 film screens with a new live score composed and performed on hammered dulcimers and voice by Smith. Gateshead Tyneside Cinema (29 April), Hebden Bridge Picturehouse (3 May), Cardiff Chapter Arts Centre (4), Bracknell South Hill Park (5), London Barbican (6), Lewes All Saints Arts Centre (22). www.dulcimer.co.uk

Yellow Swans + Astral Social Club

The Portland duo headline an Upset! The Rhythm event with two stages also including the likes of Arrington De Dionyo, Ignatz, Talibam! and Rameses III. London Corsica Studios, 25 May, 8pm, £8, www.upsettherhythm.co.uk

You Are Hear

Fifth birthday and CD launch party for the alternative radio show with live music from Pram, Germlin, Bohman Brothers and Xylitol with YAH DJs Magz Hall and Jim Backhouse and guest DJs Jonny Trunk and Tunng. London Cargo, 31 May, 7pm, £8, www.youarehear.co.uk

Young Gods

Single UK date for the Swiss group now in its 22nd year. London Dingwalls, 15 May, www.younggods.com

Club Spaces

Boat-Ting

Twice a month Improv-and-more club on a boat moored on the Thames. Music from Lol Coxhill/Steve Noble/John Edwards, Ivor Kallin/Alan Wilkinson/Paul May/Dave Tucker and Terry Edwards (7 May); John Edwards/Steve Noble/Leila Adu, Hoots 'N' Roots and Steve Beresford/Roger Turner/Alan Tomlinson (21). London Yacht Club, every first and third Monday, 8pm, £6/£4, 020 8659 3406, www.boat-ting.com

Bohman Brothers Present

Improvised music nights. This month sees performances by Adam Bohman/Adrian Northover/Dave Tucker, David Leahy/Jamie McCarthy/Angeline Conaghan and Steve Beresford & Satoko Fukuda (2 May); and Veryan Weston/Hannah Marshall/Ingrid Laubrock, Gus Garside/Dan Powell/Thor Magnusson and Alan Wilkinson & John Coxon. London BAC, 8:45pm, £5/£3, 020 7223 2223

Burst Couch #21

Eclectic electronic music, in conjunction with Futuresonic (see UK Festivals) featuring live sets from Si-cut.db, Illuminati and visuals from VJ Fusion. Manchester Briton's Protection Hotel, 12 May, 8pm, £3, 0161 434 0264

Club Silencio

Occasional improvised music night now in its seventh year presents Juan Cantizzani, Geoff Smith and The Surly Bonds Of Earth. Brighton West Hill Hall, 26 May, 8pm, £4, www.myspace.com/slightlyofffilter

Cube Cinema

Live music, movies and creative events at this volunteer run space in Bristol. Ned Collette (9 May), Loney, Dear (18), Brightblack Morning Light (21), Grupo Anya Oron (26), www.cubecinema.com

Fear Of Jazz

Live music from Milanese, Rocketnumbernine and Sveldt. London Pool, 30 May, £7, www.myspace.com/fearofjazz

Free Radicals

Latest instalment of concerts for improvisors old and new with John Butcher & Dave Tucker, Lol Coxhill/Alex Hawkins/Dominic Lash and Juan Cantizzani. London Red Rose, 2 May, 8pm, £5/£3, 07778 363492, gerard.tierney@gmail.com

Frimp

Ongoing free Improv night with the regular trio of Paul Dunmall/Bruce Coates/Trevor Lines joined by collaborators Mark Sanders, Jamie Smith and Colin Mills. Birmingham Victoria, 5 May, 8pm, £6/£4, 0121 415 4491, www.myspace.com/brucecoates

Improvzone

A new evening where contributors can improvise after uploading their audio onto the Website. London Imbibe, 29 May (last Tuesday monthly), 7:30pm, free, www.improvzone.com

Klinker East

A new regular Klinker club finds its home in Dalston. Performances from Zolan Quibble, Zali Krishna, Sibyl Madrigal & Alex Ward, Lemon Squeeze, R and Bicycle Clip Sex (14 May). London Vortex, second Mondays, 8:30pm, £7/£4, www.klinkerclub.info

Klinker North

Expect anything and everything. May events include Olympic Clamp Down + Lol Coxhill/Steve Noble/John Edwards (4 May), John Coxon/Alan Wilkinson/Tony Marsh + Sasha Galper & Hugh Metcalfe (11), Nicholas Christian & Bechir Saade (18), Three Ring Circus + Jim LeBargue (25). London new venue tbc, every Friday, 8:30, £5/£3, www.klinkerclub.info

Klinker South

May events include Alex Hawkins + Bedshitting (3 May), Sasha Galper & Hugh Metcalfe (10), Lisa Ullin Quartet (17), Free Base (24), Mick Beck + Paddlock (31). London Ivy House, every Thursday, 020 7635 7824, www.klinkerclub.info

Late At Tate Britain

Exhibitions, performances, music, talks and films with May featuring London Laptop Orchestra. London Tate Britain, 4 May (first Friday of month), 6pm, free, www.tate.org.uk

On The Edge

Improvised and experimental music from The Safehouse Wildcard Ensemble, Vole and Geoff Hearn/Ken Hyder. Brighton Open House, 30 May, 8:30pm, £5/£4, gusgarside@ntworld.com

Ray's Jazz

Monthly free improvisation series continues with a collaboration between Adam Bohman & Patrizia Paolini. London Ray's Jazz at Foyles, 31 May, 6pm, free, 020 7440 3205

Seeds & Bridges

Concert series of adventurous music with performances from Patrick Farmer, Pascal Nichols and Rob Gawthrop. Hull RED Gallery, 5 May, £3, www.myspace.com/seedsandbridges

Spirit Of Gravity

Long running electronic and experimental music night. Music from Harmonium Hash Table, faoi, Terror Wogan vs Sirloin Dion. Brighton Marlborough Theatre, 29 May, 8:30pm, £4/£3, www.spiritofgravity.com

Whitechapel Late Night Fridays

Weekly twilight adventures in music, performance and art sponsored by The Wire with Where The Wild Things Are (4 May), Cape Farewell (11), The Eruptors: Like Spinal Tap never happened... (18) and L'Ange Lapine (25). London Whitechapel, every Friday, 7–11pm, £6–£3, www.whitechapel.org

Out There items for inclusion in the June issue should reach us by Friday 4 May

NB The radio listings column will return next month. In the meantime, for links to online radio stations go to www.thewire.co.uk/links/



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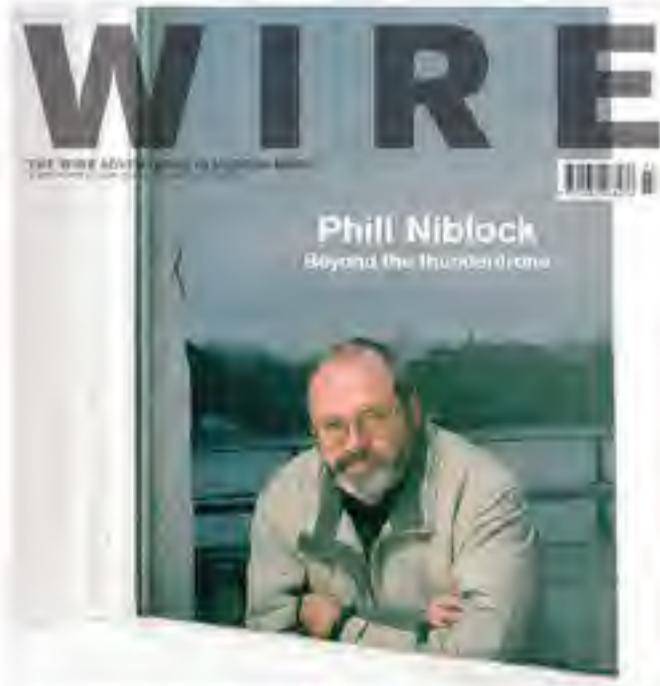
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The Wire Tapper 1 Issue 170 April 1998

Vega/Vaino/Vaisanen, Mass, Mixmaster Mike, si-(cut).db Vs Scanner, Scala, Cornelius, Roedelius, Nassim Maalouf, Solex, Kreidler, Dj Food Vs David Byrne, Arto Lindsay, Schneider TM, Porter Ricks, Midnight Funk Association, Mimi, 2nd Gen

The Wire Tapper 2 Issue 177 November 1998

Slicker, Rhys Chatham, Angela Jaeger & David Cunningham, DAF, Tom Ze, Meridiem (Percy Howard/Fred Frith/Bill Laswell/Charles Hayward), Jane Dowe & Terre Thaemitz, Tarwater, Powerfield, Sam Prekop, Puppy, Jad Fair & Yo La Tengo, The Pastels, Badawi, Bradford

The Wire Tapper 3 Issue 182 April 1999

Supersilent, High Rise, Rothko, We, Gas, To Rococo Rot, Thurston Moore/Evan Parker/Walter Prati, Model 500, Pandit Shiv Kumar Sharma, Khan, Hood, Paul Panhuysen, Robert Ashley, Sheila Chandra, Void, Rhys Chatham

The Wire Tapper 4 Issue 186 August 1999

FX Randomiz, Pierre Bastien, snd, Pan American & BJ Cole, Vandermarck 5, SS+D, Alog, Powerfield, Low Res, Chief Baonoko & His Budu Men, Clive Graham, Do Make Say Think, Warn Defever, Signal, Klangstabil, Unit, Daniel Figgis

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Bradford, Stephen Vitiello, Vaino/Vaisanen/Einheit, Kimmo Pohjonen, Wire, Stylus, John Wall, Curd Duca, Fennesz/O'Rourke/Rehberg, I'm Sore Vs Noise Camp, Daniel Givens, Arne Nordheim, Yo La Tengo, Vert, Aesop Quartet, Mira Calix, Fushitsusha

The Wire Tapper 6 Issue 200 October 2000

CD1: The Fall, Flanger, Susumu Yokota, Ran Blake, Christian Marclay, Otomo Yoshihide, Sensational, General Magic, Pan Sonic, Jan Jelinek, poire_z, HIM, David Grubbs, Trio Hurricane+1, Angus MacLise, Glass Cage
CD 2: Nurse With Wound, Faust, John Fahey, Nils Økland, Coil, Janek Schaefer, Current Ninety Three, Djivan Gasparyan, Peanut Butter Wolf featuring Rasco, I-Sound, BitTonic & si-(cut).db, C-Schulz & Hajsch, Tom Recchion, Pluramon, Hermann Nitsch

The Wire Tapper 7 Issue 207 May 2001

Four Tet, Pulseprogramming, Daniel Figgis, Jin Hi Kim, Kim Hiorthøy, Antibalas Afrobeat Orchestra, Bigg Jus, Nolte, Steinbrüchel, Mica Parade, Illusion Of Safety, Monks Of The Monastery Of Gyütö, Tibet, Eardrum, Lasse Marhaug, Max Nagl/Edward Gorey featuring Julie Tippett

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23 Skidoo, Jah Wobble & Temple Of Sound, Cornelius, Fog, Goodheart Allen Powell Trio, Chas Smith, Michael Jon Fink, Murcof, Electrelane, No-Neck Blues Band, Set Fire To Flames, Workshop, Small Rocks, The Rip-Off Artist, Noxag, Xinli Supreme

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CD 1: Liars, Themselves, Tarwater, Mum, Badawi, Suicide, Supersilent, Polwechsel/Fennesz, Wazahugy, Asa-Chang & Junray, Deadbeat, Vadim, The Oxes, Sagan, Leafcutter John, Sun
CD 2: Max Tundra, Wire, Sonic Youth/ICP/The Ek, Sigur Rós, John Fahey, A Small Good Thing, The Sea And Cake, Masha Orella Dictaphone, Pulseprogramming, Electrelane, Ellery Eskelin with Andrea Parkins & Jim Black, Jimmy Lyons Trio, Amon Tobin, D'Arcangelo

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CD 2: Heat Sensor featuring M Sayyid, Günter Müller & Toshimaru Nakamura, Stafrænn Häkon, Schlammpeitziger, Jah Wobble, Laibach, Lumen, Satoru Wono, U, Erik Friedlander, Susanna And The Magical Band, Clogs, Sagor & Swing, Satanicpornocultshop, David Grubbs

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To Rococo Rot, Icarus, Juana Molina, Wibutee, Philip Clemo, Albert Ayler, Chris McGregor & The Brotherhood Of Breath, Matthew Dear, Jah Wobble, Arthur Russell, Henrik Rylander, Green Milk From The Planet Orange, Mountains, Slowblow, Un Caddie Renversé Dans l'Herbe, poire_z & Phil Minton

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CD 2: Cul De Sac & Damo Suzuki, Meadow House, Milky Globe, Staalplaats Soundsystem, Jason Kahn & Gunter Müller, Andrew Pekler Carter Tutti, Dj Rupture featuring Sister Nancy, Burnt Sugar Vs The Dominatrix, Am/Pm, David Grubbs & Nikos Veliotis, Gary Lucas & Jozef Van Wissem, Bonnie 'Prince' Billy & Matt Sweeney, Damon & Naomi, Faz & Alex Ayuli, Ana Da Silva, Christian Renou, Enigma Device, Shining, M Bentley

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147 **Coldcut/Ninja Tune**, Hypersymposium, Ronald Shannon Jackson, Philip Glass's Jukebox, Jaki Liebezeit, Photeek, Negativland, Rhys Chatham, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan
152 **A Guy Called Gerald**, David Thomas, Jim O'Rourke meets John Fahey, Throbbing Gristle, Henry Rollins's Jukebox, Einstürzende Neubauten, Cristian Vogel, Lamb
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154 **The Illbient Alliance** (Byzar, Wordsound, Sub Dub, Soundlab, Bill Laswell, Ben Neill, DJ Olive), The Primer: Stockhausen, Jeru The Damaja, James Chance's Jukebox, Charlemagne Palestine
155 **96 Rewind**, Laibach, Prince Paul, Khan & Jammin' Unit, Harold Budd's Jukebox, Asahito Nanjo, Hoppy Kamiyama, John White, Kreidler, Dom & Roland, Richard Youngs, John Law
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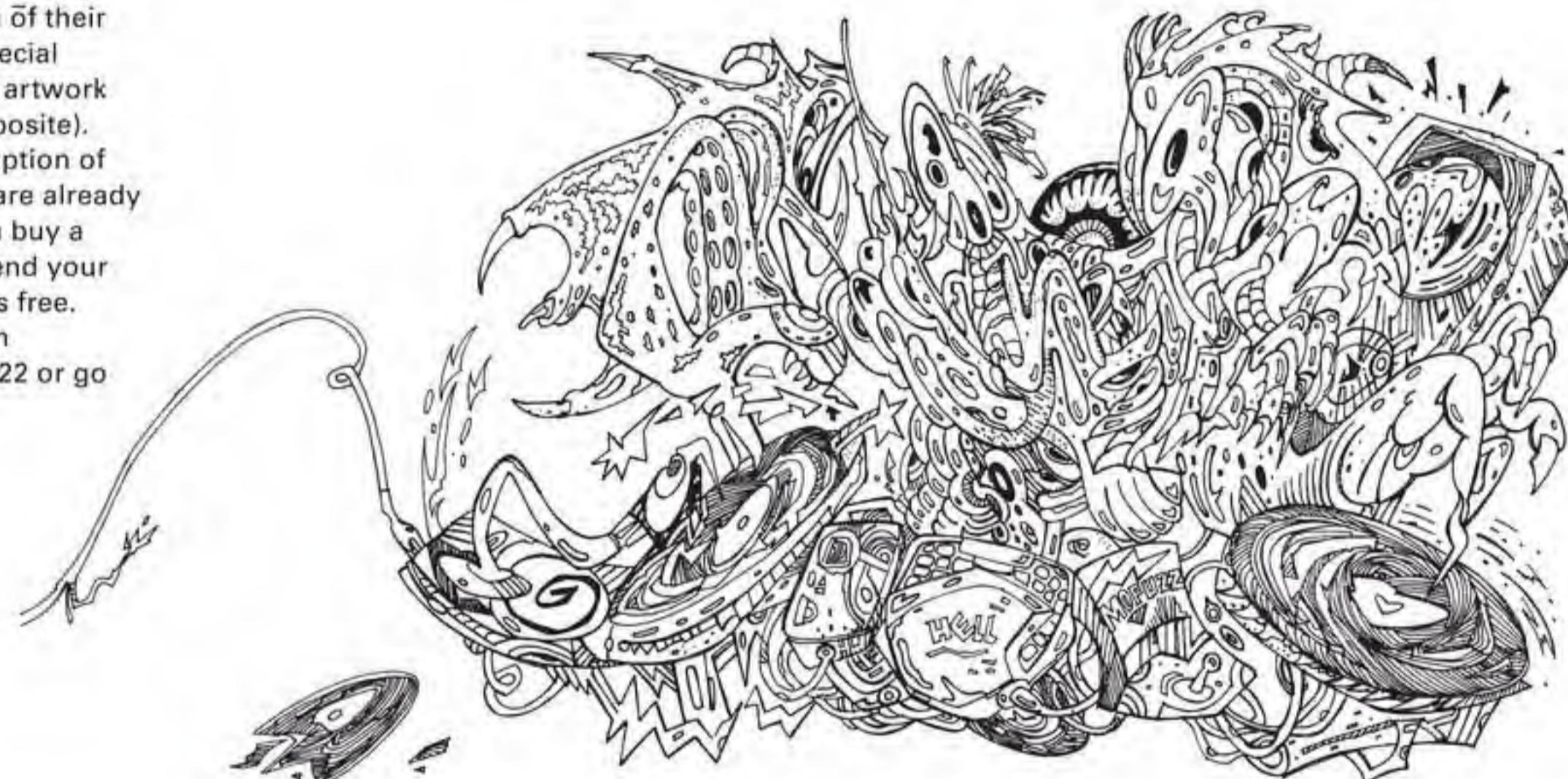
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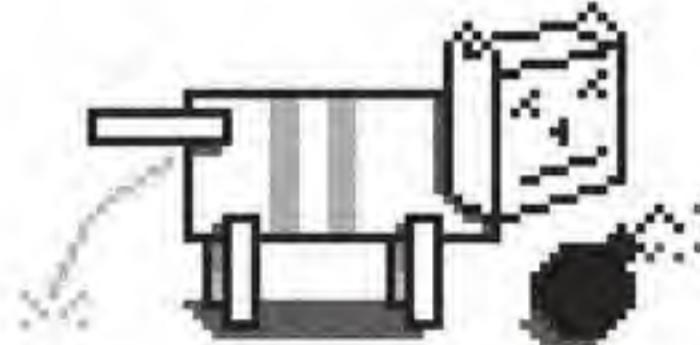
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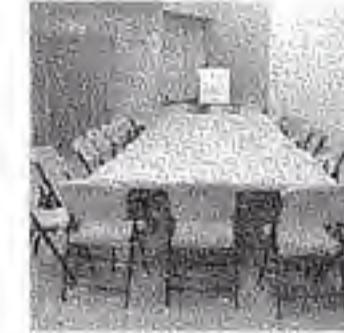
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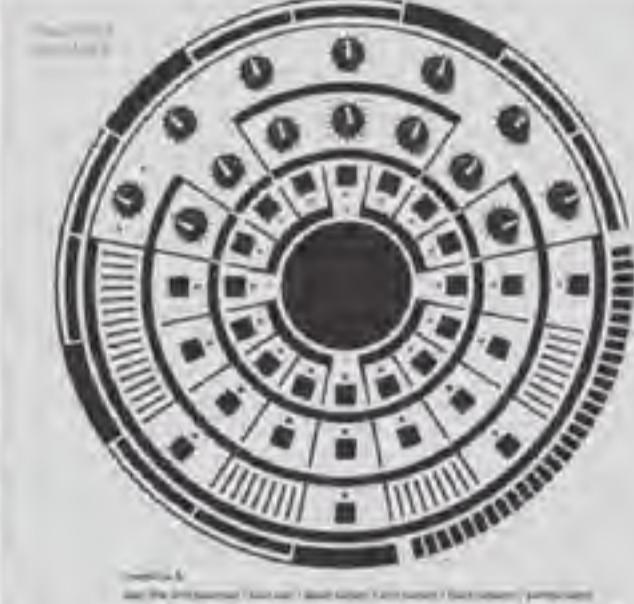
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Epiphanies

Steve Winwood's solo pop songs helped Joseph Stannard define hazy teenage emotions as well as whet his appetite for immersive music



Oceanic diver: Steve Winwood, 1980

Writing about Panda Bear's Person Pitch recently, I found my thoughts swimming distractingly around the idea of oceanic rock. The term, coined in the 80s by The Wire contributor Simon Reynolds during his time at Melody Maker, described a loose affiliation of groups including The Cocteau Twins, AR Kane and Hugo Largo, all of whom could be discussed in terms of drift, immersion and openended flow. Person Pitch demanded to be described in these terms and, to these ears, represented the fullest realisation of the notion so far. Panda Bear had shucked off the shackles of traditional rock instrumentation, much like My Bloody Valentine threatened to with Loveless before Kevin Shields retreated from his own endlessly multiplying possibilities. The resulting sample-heavy album is less about the ocean than of the ocean, a sonic approximation of immersive bliss. All well and good, I thought, but where did my own fascination for submerged pop begin? It wasn't with any of the outfits Reynolds had touted. I could trace my own predilection for drift back to a single piece of mass produced black vinyl, manufactured in 1980 and entirely unrelated to the surrounding post-punk palaver of the time.

As a kid, I knew that Steve Winwood was a name to be respected. My father, a drummer, had a connection to the ex-Spencer Davis Group/Traffic/Blind Faith multi-instrumentalist; both had emerged from the British jazz blues boom of the 60s, which meant they had inevitably crossed paths at various points. Dad had drummed for Winwood at his first solo gig following the disbandment of Traffic at Rough Hill Festival in 1978 and the two musicians eventually ended up sharing a label, Island Records, through which Winwood pursued his increasingly successful solo career while my father was a member of Marianne Faithfull's group circa Broken English (1979), Dangerous Acquaintances (1981) and A Child's Adventure (1983).

I wasn't terribly interested in music in my pre-teen years. My parents owned the 7" of Winwood's 1980

song "Spanish Dancer", and I must have heard it around the house countless times, but only really listened properly when I was 13 or 14. I became obsessed. I'd sit in front of my record player, hypnotised by the gentle waves of limpid, watery synth drifting out of the speakers, the snare sounding as though it was being hit two inches underwater and the kick drum beating a pattern like the footfall of a supremely confident explorer in warm, sensual climes. The vocal is somewhat gauche, in keeping with the layers of tremulous synth that dominate the song, and seems to express both nervousness and exhilaration at being out of one's depth. Winwood plays everything on the song (and its parent album, *Arc Of A Diver*), and as a result it sounds a bit ramshackle, the chords played with the same engaging hamfistedness that characterises roughly contemporary 'alone in the studio' endeavours by Todd Rundgren (Hermit Of Mink Hollow) and Prince (For You). This enhances the intimacy of the recording, although I didn't know it at the time. I just knew that it felt as if Steve was addressing me directly, telling me about some incredible new feeling he had discovered, one not dissimilar to my own upon hearing the record: "You can feel the heat/No one has to tell you."

I had my first experience of being erotically torn by a song, stretched between the solid seabed of the rhythm section and the miasmic reverie of the melody, simultaneously being made aware of an ache, an absence in my insides. Winwood's lyrics spoke of balmy evenings, street parties, generously hipped girls submitting to a voluptuous grace that I, as an unseemly suburban virgin, couldn't hope to attain. "It takes me out/Across the wall," sings Winwood, and that's precisely where I wanted to be. Outside of my limited self, connected to the infinite, granted admission to the sublime. "Spanish Dancer" articulated my desire to be engulfed, embraced, perhaps even drowned in a beautiful other. The very idea that such a glorious alternative might exist! I was thrilled.

"Spanish Dancer" promises much, and like all pop music – good or bad – it ultimately withholds the goods. The pop song may only be a mirage, a heat haze, something not quite graspable, but this particular one still means an awful lot to me; partly because it arrived just when I needed something to help describe feelings for which I had no vocabulary, and partly because it primed me for the work of aquanauts such as Arthur Russell, Can, Robert Wyatt and Talk Talk. I've since discovered avant folkerman John Martyn, whose unspeakably lovely One World (1977) comes from the very same lagoon as "Spanish Dancer" and features Winwood prominently on Moog synthesizer. Lately, the likes of Panda Bear, Cave In and Growing have provided ample opportunity for immersion.

As for Winwood, in recent years I've uncovered further confirmation of his right to sit in the pantheon of wayward British musical talents, mostly by leafing through the back pages of his career. I've learned to appreciate the folky jazz funk fusions of Traffic, whose John Barleycorn Must Die, The Low Spark Of High Heeled Boys and Shoot Out At The Fantasy Factory must rank as some of the most adventurous yet unpretentious British art rock albums of the 1970s. A handful of tracks from Winwood's somewhat overcooked 1986 album Back In The High Life boast the same seductive wistfulness of "Spanish Dancer", most notably the title track and the gloriously maudlin "My Love Is Leaving Me", which, like the title track of *Arc Of A Diver*, was co-written by Britain's greatest pop eccentric, Vivian Stanshall. However, little of Winwood's music of the last 25 years has had the homespun intimacy and intrepid urban romanticism of "Spanish Dancer". Listening to the song while writing this piece, it still takes me out across the wall, and I still wonder if I might be allowed to stay there one day. □

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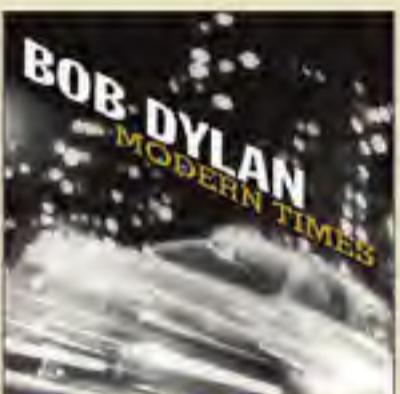
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